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Wm. M. Smith

# A C C O U N T

OF THE

## LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

*WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D. F.R.S.E.*

LATE PRINCIPAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
AND HISTORIOGRAPHER TO HIS MAJESTY  
FOR SCOTLAND.

[Read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh ]

SECOND EDITION.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE principal authorities for the biographical details in the following pages were communicated to me by Dr. Robertson's eldest son, Mr. William Robertson, Advocate. To him I am indebted, not only for the original letters with which he has enabled me to gratify the curiosity of my Readers, but for every other aid which he could be prompted to contribute, either by regard for his father's memory, or by friendship for myself.

My information with respect to the earlier part of Dr. Robertson's life was derived almost entirely from one of his oldest and most valued friends, the Rev. Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk.

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It is proper for me to add, that this Memoir was read at different meetings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh ; and was destined for a place in their Transactions. The length to which it has extended, suggested the idea of a separate publication, and the addition of an Appendix.

During the long interval which has elapsed since it was composed, a few sentences have been occasionally inserted, in which a reference is made to later criticisms on Dr. Robertson's writings. I mention this circumstance, in order to account for some slight anachronisms.

DUGALD STEWART.

College of EDINBURGH,  
16th May, 1801.

ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
LIFE AND WRITINGS

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D.

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SECTION FIRST.

*From Dr. ROBERTSON's Birth till the Publication  
of his History of Scotland.*

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D. late Principal of the University of Edinburgh, and Historiographer to his Majesty for Scotland, was the son of the Reverend William Robertson, Minister of the Old Gray-Friar's Church, and of Eleanor Pitcairn, daughter of David Pitcairn, Esq. of Dreghorn. By his father he was descended from the Robertsons of Gladney in the county of Fife; a branch of the respectable

able family of the same name, which has, for many generations, possessed the estate of Struan in Perthshire.

He was born in 1721, at Borthwick (in the county of Mid-Lothian), where his father was then Minister; and received the first rudiments of his education at the school of Dalkeith, which, from the high reputation of Mr. Leslie as a Teacher, was at that time resorted to from all parts of Scotland. In 1733, he again joined his father's family on their removal to Edinburgh; and, towards the end of the same year, he entered on his course of academical study.

From this period till the year 1759, when, by the publication of his *Scottish History*, he fixed a new era in the literary annals of his country, the habits and occurrences of his life were such as to supply few materials for Biography; and the imagination is left to fill up a long interval spent in the silent pursuit of letters, and enlivened by the secret anticipation of future eminence. His genius was not of that forward and irregular growth, which forces itself prema-

turely on public notice; and it was only a few intimate and discerning friends, who, in the native vigour of his powers, and in the patient culture by which he laboured to improve them, perceived the earhests of a fame that was to last for ever.

The large proportion of Dr. Robertson's life which he thus devoted to obscurity will appear the more remarkable, when contrasted with his early and enthusiastic love of study. Some of his oldest common-place books, still in his son's possession, (dated in the years 1735, 1736, and 1737,) bear marks of a persevering assiduity, unexampled perhaps at so tender an age; and the motto prefixed to all of them, (*Vita sine literis mors est,*) attests how soon those views and sentiments were formed, which, to his latest hour, continued to guide and to dignify his ambition. In times such as the present, when literary distinction leads to other rewards, the labours of the studious are often prompted by motives very different from the hope of fame, or the inspiration of genius; but when Dr. Robertson's career commenced, these were the only incitements

which existed to animate his exertions. The trade of Authorship was unknown in Scotland; and the rank which that country had early acquired among the learned nations of Europe, had, for many years, been sustained entirely by a small number of eminent men, who distinguished themselves by an honourable and disinterested zeal in the ungainful walks of abstract science.

Some presages, however, of better times were beginning to appear. The productions of Thomson and of Mallet were already known and admired in the metropolis of England, and an impulse had been given to the minds of the rising generation, by the exertions of a few able and enlightened men, who filled important stations in the Scottish Universities. Dr. Hutcheson of Glasgow, by his excellent writings, and still more by his eloquent lectures, had diffused, among a numerous race of pupils, a liberality of sentiment, and a refinement of taste, unknown before in this part of the island; and the influence of his example had extended, in no inconsiderable degree, to that seminary where

Dr.

Dr. Robertson received his education. The Professorship of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh was then held by Sir John Pringle, afterwards President of the Royal Society of London ; who, if he did not rival Dr. Hutcheson's abilities, was not surpassed by him in the variety of his scientific attainments, or in a warm zeal for the encouragement of useful knowledge. His efforts were ably seconded by the learning and industry of Dr. Stevenson, Professor of Logic ; to whose valuable prelections (particularly to his illustrations of Aristotle's Poetics and of Longinus on the Sublime) Dr. Robertson has been often heard to say, that he considered himself as more deeply indebted, than to any other circumstance in his academical studies. The bent of his genius did not incline him to mathematical or physical pursuits, notwithstanding the strong recommendations they derived from the popular talents of Mr. Maclaurin ; but he could not fail to receive advantage from the eloquence with which that illustrious man knew how to adorn the most abstracted subjects, as well as from that correctness and purity in his

## 6 ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND

compositions, which still entitle him to a high rank among our best writers, and which no Scottish author of the same period had been able to attain.

A number of other learned and respectable men, of whose names the greater part now exist in tradition only, were then resident in Edinburgh. A club, or society of\* these, carried on for some years a private correspondence with Dr. Berkeley, the celebrated Bishop of Cloyne, on the subject of his metaphysical publications; and are said to have been numbered by him among the few who completely comprehended the scope of his reasonings against the existence of *matter*. The influence of this society, in diffusing that spirit of philosophical research which has since become so fashionable in Scotland, has often been mentioned to me by those who had the best opportunities of observing the rise and progress of Scottish literature.

\* Called the *Rankenian Club*, from the name of the person in whose tavern its meetings were held. The learned and ingenious Dr. Wallace, Author of the Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind, was one of the leading members.

I have

I have entered into these details, partly as they suggest some circumstances which conspired with Dr. Robertson's natural inclination in fixing his studious habits; and partly as they help to account for the sudden transition which Scotland made, about this period, from the temporary obscurity into which it had sunk, to that station which it has since maintained in the republic of letters. A great stock both of genius and of learning existed in the country; but the difficulty of overcoming the peculiarities of a provincial idiom, seemed to shut up every avenue to fame by means of the press, excepting in those departments of science, where the nature of the subject is such as to dispense with the graces of composition.

Dr. Robertson's ambition was not to be checked by these obstacles; and he appears, from a very early period of life, to have employed, with much perseverance, the most effectual means for surmounting them. Among other expedients, he was accustomed to exercise himself in the practice of translation; and he had even gone so far in the

cultivation of this very difficult art, as to have thought seriously of preparing for the press a version of *Marcus Antoninus*, when he was anticipated, by an anonymous publication at Glasgow, in the execution of his design. In making choice of this Author, he was probably not a little influenced by that partiality with which (among the writings of the Heathen Moralists) he always regarded the remains of the Stoical Philosophy.

Nor was his ambition limited to the attainment of the honours that reward the industry of the recluse student. Anxious to distinguish himself by the utility of his labours in that profession to which he had resolved to devote his talents, and looking forward, it is probable, to the active share he was afterwards to take in the Ecclesiastical Policy of Scotland, he aspired to add to the art of classical composition, the powers of a persuasive and commanding speaker. With this view, he united with some of his contemporaries, during the last years of his attendance at College, in the formation of a Society, where their object was to cultivate

vate the study of elocution, and to prepare themselves, by the habits of extemporary discussion and debate, for conducting the business of popular assemblies. Fortunately for Dr. Robertson, he had here associates to contend with worthy of himself: among others, Dr. William M'Ghie, an ingenious young Physician, afterwards well-known in London; Mr. William Cleghorn, afterwards Professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh; Dr. John Blair, late Prebendary of Westminster; Dr. Wilkie, Author of the *Epigoniad*; and Mr. John Home, Author of the Tragedy of *Douglas*.

His studies at the University being at length finished, Dr. Robertson was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Dalkeith in 1741, and in 1743 he was presented to the living of Gladsmuir in East Lothian by the Earl of Hopeton. The income was but inconsiderable (the whole emoluments not exceeding one hundred pounds a-year): but the preferment, such as it was, came to him at a time singularly fortunate; for, not long afterwards, his father and mother died within a few hours of each other, leaving a family

a family of six daughters and a younger son, in such circumstances as required every aid which his slender funds enabled him to bestow.

Dr. Robertson's conduct in this trying situation, while it bore the most honourable testimony to the generosity of his dispositions, and to the warmth of his affections, was strongly marked with that manly decision in his plans, and that persevering steadiness in their execution, which were characteristical features of his mind. Undeterred by the magnitude of a charge, which must have appeared fatal to the prospects that had hitherto animated his studies; and resolved to sacrifice to a sacred duty all personal considerations, he invited his father's family to Gladsmuir, and continued to educate his sisters under his own roof, till they were settled respectably in the world. Nor did he think himself at liberty, till then, to complete an union, which had been long the object of his wishes, and which may be justly numbered among the most fortunate incidents of his life. He remained single till 1751, when he married his

his cousin Miss Mary Nisbet, daughter of the Reverend Mr. Nisbet, one of the Ministers of Edinburgh.

While he was thus engaged in the discharge of those pious offices which had devolved upon him by the sudden death of his parents, the Rebellion of 1745 broke out in Scotland, and afforded him an opportunity of evincing the sincerity of that zeal for the civil and religious liberties of his country, which he had imbibed with the first principles of his education; and which afterwards, at the distance of more than forty years, when he was called on to employ his eloquence in the national commemoration of the Revolution, seemed to rekindle the fires of his youth. His situation as a country Clergyman, confined, indeed, his patriotic exertions within a narrow sphere; but even here, his conduct was guided by a mind superior to the scene in which he acted. On one occasion, (when the capital of Scotland was in danger of falling into the hands of the Rebels,) the state of public affairs appeared so critical, that he thought himself justified in laying

laying aside, for a time, the pacific habits of his profession, and in quitting his parochial residence at Gladsmuir, to join the Volunteers of Edinburgh: and when, at last, it was determined that the city should be surrendered, he was one of the small band who repaired to Haddington, and offered their services to the Commander of his Majesty's forces.

The duties of his sacred profession were, in the mean time, discharged with a punctuality, which secured to him the veneration and attachment of his parishioners; while the eloquence and taste that distinguished him as a Preacher, drew the attention of the neighbouring Clergy, and prepared the way for that influence in the Church which he afterwards attained. A sermon which he preached in the year 1755 before the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge, and which was the earliest of all his publications, affords a sufficient proof of the eminence he might have attained in that species of composition, if his genius had not inclined him more strongly to other studies. This sermon, the only one

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he ever published, has been long ranked, in both parts of the island, among the best models of pulpit eloquence in our language. It has undergone five editions; and is well known, in some parts of the Continent, in the German translation of Mr. Ebeling.

A few years before this period, he made his first appearance in the debates of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The questions which were then agitated in that place have long ceased to be interesting; but they were highly important at the time, as they involved, not only the authority of the supreme court of ecclesiastical judicature, but the general tranquillity and good order of the country. The principles which Dr. Robertson held on these subjects, and which have, for many years past, guided the policy of the Church, will again fall under our review, before the conclusion of this narrative. At present, it is sufficient to mention, that in the Assembly of 1751, when he first submitted them to public discussion, they were so contrary to the prevailing ideas, that, although he enforced them with extraordinary

ordinary powers of argument and eloquence, and was most ably supported by the late Sir Gilbert Elliot and Mr. Andrew Pringle, (afterwards Lord Alemoor,) he was left in a very small minority; the house dividing, two hundred against eleven. The year following, by a steady perseverance in the same views, he had the satisfaction of bringing over a majority to his sentiments, and gave a beginning to that system of ecclesiastical government which it was one of the great objects of his life to carry into effect, by the most vigorous and decisive, though the most temperate and conciliatory measures. A paper which he drew up in the course of these proceedings, and which will be noticed in its proper place, explains the ground-work of the plan which he and his friends afterwards pursued.

The establishment of the *Select Society* \* in Edinburgh in the year 1754, opened another field for the display and for the cultivation of his talents. This institution, intended partly for philosophical inquiry, and

\* Appendix, Note A.

partly

partly for the improvement of the members in public speaking, was projected by Mr. Allan Ramsay the painter, and a few of his friends ; but soon attracted so much of the public notice, that in the following year the number of members exceeded a hundred, including all the individuals in Edinburgh and the neighbourhood who were most distinguished by genius or by literary attainments. In the list of those who united with Mr. Ramsay in the formation of this society, we find the names of Dr. Robertson, Mr. David Hume, Mr. Adam Smith, Mr. Wedderburn (now Lord Chancellor), Lord Kames, Mr. John Home, Dr. Carlyle, Mr. Andrew Stuart, Sir Gilbert Elliot, and Lord Alemoor. The society subsisted in vigour for six or seven years, and produced debates, such as have not often been heard in modern assemblies ;—debates, where the dignity of the speakers was not lowered by the intrigues of policy, or the intemperance of faction ; and where the most splendid talents that have ever adorned this country were roused to their best exertions, by the liberal and ennobling discussions of literature

ture and philosophy. To this institution, while it lasted, Dr. Robertson contributed his most zealous support ; seldom omitting an opportunity of taking a share in its business ; and deriving from it an addition to his own fame, which may be easily conceived by those who are acquainted with his subsequent writings, or who have witnessed those powers of argument and illustration which, in the ecclesiastical courts, he afterwards employed so successfully, on subjects not so susceptible of the embellishments of eloquence.

In these courts, indeed, during the very period when the Select Society was contributing so much to the fame and to the improvement of Scotland, there occurred one subject of debate, unconnected with the ordinary details of church-government, which afforded at once full scope to Dr. Robertson's powers as a speaker, and to a display of that mild and conciliatory temper, which was afterwards, for a long course of years, so honourably employed, in healing the divisions of a church torn with faction, and in smoothing the transition

from

from the severity of puritanical manners, to habits less at variance with the genius of the times. For this important and arduous task he was fitted in an eminent degree by the happy union he exhibited in his own character, of that exemplary decency which became his order, with all the qualities that form the charm and the ornament of social life.—The occurrence to which I allude more particularly at present, was the flame kindled among the Scottish Clergy in the year 1757, by the publication of the Tragedy of Douglas, the Author of which, Mr. John Home, was then Minister of Athelstonford. The extraordinary merits of this performance, which is now become to Scotchmen a subject of national pride, were not sufficient to atone for so bold a departure from the austerity expected in a Presbyterian divine; and the offence was not a little exasperated by the conduct of some of Mr. Home's brethren, who, partly from curiosity, and partly from a friendly wish to share in the censure bestowed on the Author, were led to witness the first representation of the piece on the Edin-

burgh stage. In the whole course of the ecclesiastical proceedings connected with these incidents, Dr. Robertson distinguished himself by the ablest and most animated exertions in defence of his friends ; and contributed greatly, by his persuasive eloquence, to the mildness of that sentence in which the prosecution at last terminated. His arguments on this occasion had, it may be presumed, the greater weight, that he had never himself entered within the walls of a playhouse ; a remarkable proof, among numberless others which the history of his life affords, of that scrupulous circumspection in his private conduct, which, while it added so much to his usefulness as a Clergyman, was essential to his influence as the leader of a party ; and which so often enabled him to recommend successfully to others, the same candid and indulgent spirit that was congenial to his own mind.

The flattering notice these exertions drew to him from the public, and the rising influence he had already secured among his own order would have presented to a temper less active and persevering than his,

many

many seductions to interrupt his studies. A considerable portion of his time appears, in fact, to have been devoted, during this period of his life, to the society of his friends; but, as far as his situation enabled him to command it, it was to a society which amply compensated for its encroachment on his studious leisure, by what it added to the culture and enlargement of his mind. The improvement which, in these respects, he derived from the conversation of Patrick Lord Elibank, he often recollected in his more advanced years with peculiar pleasure; and it affords no inconsiderable proof of the penetration of that lively and accomplished Nobleman, that long before the voice of the public could have given any direction to his attachments, he had selected as the companions of his social hours, the Historian of Queen Mary, and the Author of the Tragedy of Douglas.

No seductions, however, could divert Dr. Robertson from the earliest object of his ambition; and in the midst of all his avocations, his studies had been advancing with a gradual progress. In the spring of

the year which followed the debates about Mr. Home's Tragedy, he went to London to concert measures for the publication of his History of Scotland :—a work of which the plan is said to have been formed soon after his settlement at Gladsmuir. It was published on the first of February 1759, and was received by the world with such unbounded applause, that before the end of that month, he was desired by his bookseller to prepare for a second edition.

From this moment the complexion of his fortune was changed. After a long struggle, in an obscure though a happy and hospitable retreat, with a narrow income and an increasing family, his prospects brightened at once. He saw independence and affluence within his reach ; and flattered himself with the idea of giving a still bolder flight to his genius, when no longer depressed by those tender anxieties which so often fall to the lot of men, whose pursuits and habits, while they heighten the endearments of domestic life, withdraw them from the paths of interest and ambition.

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In venturing on a step, the success of which was to be so decisive, not only with respect to his fame, but to his future comfort, it is not surprising that he should have felt, in a more than common degree, “that anxiety and diffidence so natural to an author in delivering to the world his first performance.”—“The time,” (he observes in his preface,) “which I have employed in attempting to render it worthy of the public approbation, it is perhaps prudent to conceal, till it shall be known whether that approbation is ever to be bestowed.”

Among the many congratulatory letters addressed to him on this occasion, a few have been accidentally preserved ; and, although the contents of some of them may not now appear very important, they still derive a certain degree of interest from the names and characters of the writers, and from the sympathetic share which a good-natured reader cannot fail to take in Dr. Robertson’s feelings, when he perceived the first dawning of his future fame.

In the extracts, however, which I mean at present to produce from these letters, my

principal object is to shew, how very strong an impression was made on the public mind by this work at the time of its first appearance. It was then regarded as an attempt towards a species of composition that had been cultivated with very little success in this island ; and accordingly it entitles the Author, not merely to the praise which would now be due to an Historian of equal eminence, but to a high rank among those original and leading minds that form and guide the taste of a nation. In this view, a just estimate of its peculiar merits is more likely to be collected from the testimony of such as could compare it only with the productions of former writers, than from the opinions of critics familiarised in early life to all that has since been done to imitate or to rival its beauties.

A letter from Mr. Horace Walpole, to whom some specimens of the work had been communicated during the Author's visit to London, is the earliest testimony of this kind which I have found among his papers. It is dated January 18, 1759.

“ I ex-

“ I expect with impatience your book,  
“ which you are so kind as to say you have  
“ ordered for me, and for which I already  
“ give you many thanks: the specimen I  
“ saw convinces me that I do not thank  
“ you rashly. Good Historians are the most  
“ scarce of all writers; and no wonder! a  
“ good style is not very common; thorough  
“ information is still more rare:—and if  
“ these meet, what a chance that impar-  
“ ality should be added to them! Your style,  
“ Sir, I may venture to say, I saw was un-  
“ commonly good; I have reason to think  
“ your information so: and in the few times  
“ I had the pleasure of conversing with you,  
“ your good sense and candour made me  
“ conclude, that even on a subject which we  
“ are foolish enough to make *party*, you  
“ preserve your judgment unbiassed. I fear  
“ I shall not preserve mine so; the too  
“ kind acknowledgments that I frequently  
“ receive from Gentlemen of your country,  
“ of the just praise that I paid to merit, will  
“ make me at least for the future not very  
“ unprejudiced. If the opinion of so trifling  
“ a writer as I am was of any consequence,

“ it would then be worth Scotland’s while  
“ to let the world know, that when **my** book  
“ was written, I had no reason to be partial  
“ to it:—but, Sir, your country will trust  
“ to the merit of its natives, not to foreign  
“ testimonials, for its reputation.”

This letter was followed immediately by another from Dr. Robertson’s Bookseller, Mr. Millar. It is dated 27th January 1759, a few days before the publication of the book, and conveys very flattering expressions of approbation from Dr. Warburton and Mr. Garrick, to both of whom copies had been privately sent at the Author’s request:—expressions, which, though they cannot now add much to a reputation so solidly established, were gratifying at the time, and do honour to the candour and discernment of the writers.

“ I have received,” (says Dr. Warburton, in a note addressed to Mr. Millar,) “ and  
“ read with great pleasure, the new History  
“ of Scotland, and will not wait for the  
“ judgment of the public, to pronounce it a  
“ very excellent work. From the Author’s  
“ apparent love of civil and religious liberty,  
“ I sup-

“ I suppose, that were it not for fear of  
“ offence, (which every wise man in his  
“ situation would fear to give), he would  
“ have spoken with much more freedom of  
“ the Hierarchical principles of the infant  
“ Church of Scotland.”

Mr. Garrick, beside writing to Millar, addressed himself directly to the Author.  
“ Upon my word, I was never more entertained in all my life; and though I  
“ read it aloud to a friend and Mrs. Garrick, I finished the three first books at  
“ two sittings. I could not help writing  
“ to Millar, and congratulating him upon  
“ this great acquisition to his literary  
“ treasures.—I will assure you that there  
“ is no *love lost* (as the saying is) between  
“ you and Mrs. Garrick. She is resolved  
“ to see Scotland as soon as my affairs will  
“ permit: nor do I find her inclination in  
“ the least abated, though I read your  
“ *Second Book* (in which her religion is so  
“ exquisitely handled) with all the male-  
“ volent exertion I was master of—but it  
“ would not do; she thinks you right even  
“ in that, and still resolves to see Scotland.

“ In

“ In short, if she can give up the Pope  
“ and his trumpery so readily to you, what  
“ must her poor husband think? I shall  
“ keep in England, I assure you; for you  
“ have convinced me how difficult it is to  
“ contend with the Scots in their own  
“ country.”

These agreeable anticipations of the public voice were, in a few weeks, fully confirmed by a letter from Mr. Strahan, late printer to his Majesty, and a partner of Mr. Millar's in the property of the book. It is the oldest letter of Mr. Strahan's that I have observed among Dr. Robertson's papers. Many were afterwards written, in the course of a correspondence which continued twenty years, and which Dr. Robertson always mentioned with much pleasure, and with the strongest testimonies to the worth, the liberality, and the discernment of his friend.—The concluding sentences express strongly the opinion which this very competent judge had previously formed of the probable reception of a History of Scotland.

—“ I most sincerely wish you joy of  
“ your success, and have not the least doubt  
“ but it will have all the good effects upon  
“ your future fortune which you could  
“ possibly hope for or expect.—Much de-  
“ pended on the first performance: that  
“ trial is now happily over, and henceforth  
“ you will sail with a favourable gale. In  
“ truth, to acquire such a flood of appro-  
“ bation from writing on a subject in itself  
“ so unpopular in this country, is neither a  
“ commonn or a contemptible conquest \*.”

By the kindness of Mr. Strahan’s son † I  
am enabled to quote the following passage  
from Dr. Robertson’s answer to the fore-  
going letter:

“ When we took leave, on finishing the  
“ printing of my book, I had no expecta-  
“ tion that it was so soon to come through  
“ your hands a second time. The rapidity  
“ of its success has not surprised any man  
“ more than the Author of it. I do not  
“ affect to think worse of it than is natural

\* See Appendix, (B.)

† Andrew Strahan Esq. M. P.

“ for

“ for him who made it ; and I never was  
“ much afraid of the subject, which is  
“ interesting to the English as well as  
“ Scots ; but a much more moderate success  
“ was all I looked for. However, since  
“ it has so far outgone my hopes, I enjoy  
“ it. I have flattered nobody in order to  
“ obtain it, and I have not spared to speak  
“ truth of all factions and sects.”

It would be tedious and useless to transcribe the complimentary passages which occur in various other letters from the Author's friends. Lord Royston, the late Sir Gilbert Elliot, Dr. Birch, Dr. Douglas, (now Bishop of Salisbury,) and Dr. John Blair, (late Prebendary of Westminster,) were among the first to perceive and to predict the extent of that reputation he was about to establish. A few passages from the letters addressed to him by Mr. Walpole and Mr. David Hume, as they enter more into detail concerning his merits as a writer, may, I think, be introduced into this memoir without impropriety.

“ Having finished” (says Mr. Walpole)  
“ the first volume, and made a little pro-  
“ gress

“ gress in the second, I cannot stay till I  
“ have finished the latter to tell you how  
“ exceedingly I admire the work. Your  
“ modesty will make you perhaps suppose  
“ these are words of compliment and of  
“ course; but as I can give you very good  
“ reas ons for my approbation, you may  
“ believe that I no more flatter your per-  
“ formance, than I have read it super-  
“ ficially, hastily, or carele ssly.

“ The style is most pure, proper, and  
“ equal; is very natural and easy, except  
“ now and then where, as I may justly call  
“ it, you are forced to *translate* from bad  
“ writers. You will agree with me, Sir,  
“ that an historian who writes from other  
“ authorities cannot possibly always have  
“ as flowing a style as an author whose  
“ narrative is dictated from his own know-  
“ ledge. Your perspicuity is most beau-  
“ tiful, your relation always interesting,  
“ never languid; and you have very ex-  
“ traordinarily united two merits very  
“ difficult to be reconciled; I mean, that,  
“ though you have formed your history  
“ into pieces of information, each of which

“ would make a separate memoir, yet the  
“ whole is hurried on into one uninterrupted  
“ story. I assure you I value myself  
“ on the first distinction, especially as Mr.  
“ Charles Townshend made the same re-  
“ mark. You have preserved the gravity  
“ of History without any formality, and  
“ you have at the same time avoided what I  
“ am now running into, antithesis and  
“ conceit. In short, Sir, I don’t know  
“ where or what history is written with  
“ more excellencies:—and when I say this,  
“ you may be sure, I do not forget your  
“ impartiality.—But, Sir, I will not wound  
“ your bashfulness with more encomiums;  
“ yet the public will force you to hear  
“ them. I never knew justice so rapidly  
“ paid to a work of so deep and serious a  
“ kind; for deep it is, and it must be great  
“ sense that could penetrate so far into  
“ human nature, considering how little  
“ you have been conversant with the  
“ world.”

The long and uninterrupted friendship  
which subsisted between Dr. Robertson and  
Mr. Hume is well known: and it is certainly

tainly a circumstance highly honourable to both, when we consider the wide diversity of their sentiments on the most important subjects, and the tendency which the coincidence of their historical labours would naturally have had to excite rivalship and jealousy in less liberal minds. The passages I am now to quote from Mr. Hume's letters place in a most amiable light the characters both of the writer and of his correspondent.

“ You have very good cause to be satisfied with the success of your history, as far as it can be judged of from a few weeks' publication. I have not heard of one who does not praise it warmly; and were I to enumerate all those whose suffrages I have either heard in its favour, or been told of, I should fill my letter with a list of names. Mallet told me that he was sure there was no Englishman capable of composing such a work. The town will have it that you was educated at Oxford, thinking it impossible for a mere untravelled Scotchman to produce such language. In short, you may

“ may depend on the success of your work,  
“ and that your name is known very much  
“ to your advantage.

“ I am diverting myself with the notion  
“ how much you will profit by the applause  
“ of my enemies in Scotland. Had you and  
“ I been such fools as to have given way to  
“ jealousy, to have entertained animosity  
“ and malignity against each other, and  
“ to have rent all our acquaintance into  
“ parties, what a noble amusement we  
“ should have exhibited to the blockheads,  
“ which now they are likely to be disap-  
“ pointed of. All the people whose friend-  
“ ship or judgment either of us value, are  
“ friends to both, and will be pleased with  
“ the success of both, as we will be with  
“ that of each other. I declare to you  
“ I have not of a long time had a more  
“ sensible pleasure than the good reception  
“ of your History has given me within this  
“ fortnight.”—

I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of transcribing a few paragraphs from another letter of Mr. Hume's, dated the 20th of the same month. “ I am afraid that my letters  
“ will

“ will be tedious and disagreeable to you by  
“ their uniformity. Nothing but continued  
“ and unvaried accounts of the same thing  
“ must in the end prove disgusting. Yet  
“ since you will hear me speak on this sub-  
“ je~~ct~~, I cannot help it, and must fatigue  
“ your ears as much as ours are in this place  
“ by endless, and repeated, and noisy praises  
“ of the History of Scotland. Dr. Dou-  
“ glas told me yesterday that he had seen  
“ the Bishop of Norwich, who had just  
“ bought the book from the high com-  
“ mendations he heard of it from Mr.  
“ Legge. Mallet told me that Lord Mans-  
“ field is at a loss whether he shall most  
“ esteem the matter or the style. Elliot  
“ told me, that being in company with  
“ George Grenville, that Gentleman was  
“ speaking loud in the same key. Our  
“ friend pretended ignorance; said he knew  
“ the Author, and if he thought the book  
“ good for any thing, would send for it and  
“ read it. Send for it by all means, (said  
“ Mr. Grenville,) you have not read a better  
“ book of a long time. But, said Elliot, I

“ suppose, although the matter may be  
“ tolerable, as the Author was never on  
“ this side of the Tweed till he wrote it, it  
“ must be very barbarous in the expres-  
“ sion. By no means, cried Mr. Gren-  
“ ville; had the Author lived all his life in  
“ London, and in the best company, he  
“ could not have expressed himself with  
“ greater elegance and purity. Lord Lyt-  
“ telton seems to think that since the time  
“ of St. Paul there scarce has been a better  
“ writer than Dr. Robertson. Mr. Wal-  
“ pole triumphs in the success of his fa-  
“ vorites the Scotch, &c. &c. &c.

\*       \*       \*       \*

“ The great success of your book, beside  
“ its real merit, is forwarded by its pru-  
“ dence, and by the deference paid to  
“ established opinions. It gains also by its  
“ being your first performance, and by its  
“ surprising the public, who are not upon  
“ their guard against it. By reason of these  
“ two circumstances justice is more readily  
“ done to its merit, which, however, is  
“ really so great, that I believe there is  
“ scarce

“ scarce another instance of a first performance being so near perfection \*.”

Of this work, so flattering to the Author by its first success, no fewer than fourteen editions were published before his death, and he had the satisfaction to see its popularity increase to the last, notwithstanding the repeated assaults it had to encounter from various writers, distinguished by their controversial acuteness, and seconded by all the prepossessions which are likely to influence the opinions of the majority of readers. The character of Mary has been delineated anew, and the tale of her misfortunes has again been told, with no common powers of expression and pathos, by an Historian more indulgent to her errors, and more undistinguishing in his praise: but, after all, it is in the History of Dr. Robertson that every one still reads the transactions of her reign; and such is his skilful contrast of light and shade, aided by the irresistible charm of his narration, that the story of the beautiful and unfortunate Queen, as related

\* Appendix, Note C.

by him, excites on the whole a deeper interest in her fortunes, and a more lively sympathy with her fate, than have been produced by all the attempts to canonize her memory, whether inspired by the sympathetic zeal of the Romish church, or the enthusiasm of Scottish chivalry.

In perusing the letters addressed to Dr. Robertson on the publication of this book, it is somewhat remarkable that I have not found one in which he is charged with the slightest unfairness towards the Queen; and that, on the contrary, almost all his correspondents accuse him of an undue prepossession in her favour. "I am afraid," (says Mr. Hume,) "that you, as well as "myself, have drawn Mary's character "with too great softenings. She was un- "doubtedly a violent woman at all times. "You will see in *Munden* proofs of the "utmost rancour against her innocent, "good-natured, dutiful son. She certainly "disinherited him. What think you of a "conspiracy for kidnapping him, and de- "livering him a prisoner to the King of "Spain, never to recover his liberty till he

“ should turn Catholic?—Tell Goodall, “ that if he can but give me up Queen “ Mary, I hope to satisfy him in every “ thing else; and he will have the pleasure “ of seeing John Knox and the Reformers “ made very ridiculous.”

“ It is plain,” (says Mr. Walpole,) “ that “ you wish to excuse Mary; and yet it is “ so plain that you never violate truth in “ her favour, that I own I think still worse “ of her than I did, since I read your “ History.”

Dr. Birch expresses himself much to the same purpose. “ If the second volume of “ the State Papers of Lord Burleigh, “ published since Christmas here, had ap- “ peared before your History had been “ finished, it would have furnished you “ with reasons for entertaining a less fa- “ vorable opinion of Mary Queen of Scots “ in one or two points, than you seem at “ present possessed of.”

Dr. John Blair too, in a letter dated from London, observes to Dr. Robertson, that “ the only general objection to his work “ was founded on his tenderness for Queen

“ Mary.” “ Lord Chesterfield,” (says he,) “ though he approves much of your His-  
“ tory, told me, that he finds this to be  
“ a bias which no Scotchman can get the  
“ better of.”

I would not be understood, by quoting these passages, to give any opinion upon the subject to which they refer. It is a subject which I have never examined with attention, and which, I must confess, never excited my curiosity. Whatever judgment we form concerning the points in dispute, it leads to no general conclusion concerning human affairs, nor throws any new light on human character. Like any other historical question, in which the evidence has been industriously darkened by the arts of contending parties, the proofs of Mary’s innocence or guilt may furnish an amusing and harmless employment to the leisure of the antiquary ; but, at this distance of time, it is difficult to conceive how prejudice or passion should enter into the discussion, or should magnify it into an object of important and serious research. With respect to Dr. Robertson’s narrative, in parti-

particular, it is sufficiently manifest, that whatever inaccuracies may be detected in it by the labours of succeeding inquirers, they can never furnish to the partizans of Mary, any ground for impeaching his candour and good-faith as a Writer. All his prepossessions (if he had any on this subject) must have been in favour of the Queen; for, it was chiefly from the powerful interest excited by her story, that he could hope for popularity with the multitude; and, it was only by the romantic pictures which her name presents to the fancy, that he could accommodate to the refinement of modern taste, the annals of a period, where perfidy, cruelty, and bigotry, appear in all their horrors; unembellished by those attractions which, in other states of society, they have so often assumed, and which, how much soever they may afflict the moralist, yet facilitate and adorn the labours of the Historian.

Among the various circumstances that distinguish Dr. Robertson's genius and taste in the execution of this work, the address with which he interweaves the personal

history of the Queen with the general events he records, is not the least remarkable. Indeed, without the aid of so interesting a character, the affairs of Scotland, during the period he treats of, could not have derived, even from his hand, a sufficient importance and dignity to engage the curiosity of the present age.

Another difficulty arising also from his subject, he appears to me to have surmounted with exquisite skill. In relating the transactions of a foreign country, however remote the period, and however antiquated the manners, it is easy for an Historian to avoid in his narrative, whatever might lessen the dignity of the actors, or lower the tone of his composition. The employment of expressions debased by common and trivial use is superseded by the necessity he is under to translate from one language into another; and the most insignificant of his details derive a charm from the novelty of the scenery. The writer too, who, in this island, employs his genius on the ancient history of England, addresses himself to readers already enamoured

enamoured of the subject, and who listen with fond prepossessions to the recital of facts consecrated in their imaginations by the tale of the nursery. Even a description of old English manners, expressed in the obsolete dialect of former centuries, pleases by its simplicity and truth; and while it presents to us those retrospects of the past on which the mind loves to dwell, has no tendency to awaken any mean or ludicrous images. But the influence of Scottish associations, so far as it is favourable to antiquity, is confined to Scotchmen alone, and furnishes no resources to the writer who aspires to a place among the English classics. Nay, such is the effect of that provincial situation to which Scotland is now reduced, that the transactions of former ages are apt to convey to ourselves exaggerated conceptions of barbarism, from the uncouth and degraded dialect in which they are recorded. To adapt the history of such a country to the present standard of British taste, it was necessary for the Author, not only to excite an interest for names which, to the majority of his readers, were formerly

merly indifferent or unknown, but, what was still more difficult, to unite in his portraits the truth of nature with the softenings of art, and to reject whatever was unmeaning or offensive in the drapery, without effacing the characteristic garb of the times. In this task of "conquering" (as Livy expresses it) "the rudeness of antiquity by the art of writing," they alone are able to judge how far Dr. Robertson has succeeded, who have compared his work with the materials out of which it was formed.

Nor are these sacrifices to modern taste inconsistent with the fidelity of a history which records the transactions of former ages. On the contrary, they aid the judgment of the reader in forming a philosophical estimate of the condition and character of our ancestors, by counteracting that strong bias of the mind which confounds human nature and human life with the adventitious and ever-changing attire which they borrow from fashion. When we read the compositions of Buchanan in his native tongue;—abounding in idioms which

which are now appropriated to the most illiterate classes of the people, and accompanied with an orthography which suggests the coarsest forms of Scottish pronunciation;— how difficult do we find it to persuade ourselves, that we are conversing with a writer, whose Latin productions vie with the best models of antiquity! No fact can illustrate more strongly the necessity of correcting our common impressions concerning the antient state of Scotland, by translating, not only the antiquated style of our forefathers into a more modern phraseology, but by translating (if I may use the expression) their antiquated fashions into the corresponding fashions of our own times.

The peculiar circumstances of Scotland since the union of the crowns, are extremely apt to warp our ideas with respect to its previous History. The happy but slow effects produced by the union of the kingdoms do not extend beyond the memory of some of our contemporaries; and the traditions we have received concerning the condition of our immediate predecessors are apt to impress us with a belief

belief that, at a still earlier period, the gloom was proportionally more deep and universal. It requires an effort of reflection to conceive the effects which must have resulted from the residence of a court; and it is not, perhaps, easy for us to avoid under-rating the importance of that court while it existed. During the long and intimate intercourse with England, which preceded the disputed succession between Bruce and Baliol, it was certainly not without its share of that “barbaric pomp” which was then affected by the English Sovereigns; nor, under our later kings, connected as it was with the court of France, could it be altogether untinctured with those envied manners and habits, of which that country has been always regarded as the parent soil, and which do not seem to be the native growth of either part of our island. These circumstances, accordingly, (aided, perhaps, in no inconsiderable degree, by the field of ambition presented by an opulent Hierarchy,) appear to have operated powerfully on the national spirit and genius. The studies  
which

which were then valued in other parts of Europe, were cultivated by many of our countrymen with distinguished success. Nor was their own vernacular tongue neglected by those, whose rank or situation destined them for public affairs. At the æra, more particularly, when Dr. Robertson's History closes, it was so rapidly assuming a more regular form, that, excepting by a different system of orthography, and a few inconsiderable peculiarities of dialect, the epistolary style of some of our Scottish statesmen is hardly distinguishable from that of Queen Elizabeth's Ministers.

This æra was followed by a long and melancholy period, equally fatal to morals and to refinement; and which had scarcely arrived at its complete termination when Dr. Robertson appeared as an Author; aspiring at once to adorn the monuments of former times, when Scotland was yet a kingdom, and to animate his countrymen by his example, in reviving its literary honours.

Before quitting this first work of Dr. Robertson, I must not omit to mention  
(what

(what forms the strongest testimony of its excellence) the severe trial it had to undergo in the public judgment, by appearing nearly at the same time with that volume of Mr. Hume's history, which involves an account of Scottish affairs during the reigns of Q. Mary and K. James.—It is not my intention to attempt a parallel of these two eminent writers: nor, indeed, would the sincerity of their mutual attachment, and the lively recollection of it which still remains with many of their common friends, justify me in stating their respective merits in the way of opposition. Their peculiar excellencies, besides, were of a kind so different, that they might be justly said (in the language which a Roman Critic employs in speaking of Livy and Sallust) to be *pares magis quam similes*. They divide between them the honour of having supplied an important blank in English literature, by enabling their countrymen to dispute the palm of historical writing with the other nations of Europe. Many have since followed their example, in attempting to bestow interest

and

and ornament on different portions of British story; but the public voice sufficiently acquits me of any partiality when I say, that hitherto they have only been followed at a distance. In this respect, I may with confidence apply to them the panegyric which Quintilian pronounces on the two great Historians of Ancient Greece;—and, perhaps, if I were inclined to characterise the beauties most prominent in each, I might, without much impropriety, avail myself of the contrast with which that panegyric concludes.

“ Historiam multi scripsere, sed nemo  
“ dubitat, duos longe cæteris præferendos,  
“ quorum diversa virtus laudem pene est  
“ parem consecuta. Densus et brevis et  
“ semper instans sibi Thucydides. Dulcis  
“ et candidus et fusus Herodotus. Ille  
“ concitatis, hic remissis affectibus melior.  
“ Ille vi, hic voluptate.”

## SECTION II.

*Progress of Dr. Robertson's Literary Plans and Undertakings.—History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V.*

DURING the time that the History of Scotland was in the press, Dr. Robertson removed with his family from Gladsmuir to Edinburgh, in consequence of a presentation which he had received to one of the churches of that city. His preferments now multiplied rapidly. In 1759, he was appointed Chaplain of Stirling Castle; in 1761, one of his Majesty's Chaplains in ordinary, for Scotland; and in 1762, he was chosen Principal of this University. Two years afterwards, the office of King's Historiographer for Scotland (with a salary of two hundred pounds a-year) was revived in his favour.

The

The revenue arising from these different appointments, though far exceeding what had ever been enjoyed before by any Presbyterian Clergyman in Scotland, did not satisfy the zeal of some of Dr. Robertson's admirers, who, mortified at the narrow field which this part of the island afforded to his ambition, wished to open to it the career of the English Church. References to such a project, occur in letters addressed to him about this time by Sir Gilbert Elliot, Mr. Hume, and Dr. John Blair. What answer he returned to them, I have not been able to learn; but, as the subject is mentioned once only by each of these Gentlemen, it is probable that his disapprobation was expressed in those decided terms which became the consistency and dignity of his character.

Dr. Robertson's own ambition was, in the mean time, directed to a different object. Soon after the publication of his Scottish History, we find him consulting his friends about the choice of another historical subject;—anxious to add new laurels to those

he had already acquired. Dr. John Blair urged him strongly on this occasion to write a complete History of England; and mentioned to him, as an inducement, a conversation between Lord Chesterfield and Colonel Irwin, in which the former said, that he would not scruple, if Dr. Robertson would undertake such a work, to move, in the House of Peers, that he should have public encouragement to enable him to carry it into execution. But this proposal he was prevented from listening to, by his unwillingness to interfere with Mr. Hume; although it coincided with a favourite plan which he himself had formed at a very early period of his life. The two subjects which appear to have chiefly divided his choice were, the History of Greece, and that of the Emperor Charles the Fifth. Between these he hesitated long, balancing their comparative advantages and disadvantages, and availing himself of all the lights that his correspondents could impart to him. Mr. Walpole and Mr. Hume took a more peculiar interest in his deliberations, and discussed the subject with him at length in various

various letters. I shall extract a few passages from these. The opinions of such Writers upon such a question cannot fail to be generally interesting ; and some of the hints they suggest may perhaps be useful to those who, conscious of their own powers, are disposed to regret that the field of historical composition is exhausted.

The following passages are copied from a letter of Mr. Walpole, dated 4th March 1759.

“ If I can throw in any additional  
“ temptation to your disposition for writing, it is worth my while, even at the  
“ hazard of my judgment and my knowledge, both of which however are small  
“ enough to make me tender of them.  
“ Before I read your History, I should  
“ probably have been glad to dictate to  
“ you, and (I will venture to say it—it  
“ satirizes nobody but myself) should have  
“ thought I did honour to an obscure  
“ Scotch Clergyman, by directing his  
“ studies with my superior lights and  
“ abilities. How you have saved me,  
“ Sir, from making a ridiculous figure,

“ by making so great an one yourself!  
“ But could I suspect, that a man I believe  
“ much younger, and whose dialect I  
“ scarce understood, and who came to me  
“ with all the diffidence and modesty of a  
“ very middling author, and who I was  
“ told had passed his life in a small living  
“ near Edinburgh; could I suspect that he  
“ had not only written what all the world  
“ now allows the best modern history, but  
“ that he had written it in the purest Eng-  
“ lish, and with as much seeming know-  
“ ledge of men and courts as if he had  
“ passed all his life in important embassies?  
“ In short, Sir, I have not power to make  
“ you, what you ought to be, a Minister  
“ of State—but I will do all I can, I will  
“ stimulate you to continue writing, and  
“ I shall do it without presumption.

“ I should like either of the subjects you  
“ mention, and I can figure one or two  
“ others that would shine in your hands.  
“ In one light the history of Greece seems  
“ preferable. You know all the materials  
“ for it that can possibly be had. It is  
“ concluded; it is clear of all objections;  
“ for

“ for perhaps nobody but I should run  
“ wildly into passionate fondness for li-  
“ berty, if I was writing about Greece.  
“ It even might, I think, be made agree-  
“ ably new, and *that* by comparing the  
“ extreme difference of their manners and  
“ ours, particularly in the article of  
“ finances, a system almost new in the  
“ world.

. . . . .

“ With regard to the History of  
“ Charles V., it is a magnificent subject,  
“ and worthy of you. It is more: it is  
“ fit for you; for you have shewn that  
“ you can write on ticklish subjects with  
“ the utmost discretion, and on subjects  
“ of religious party with temper and  
“ impartiality. Besides, by what little I  
“ have skimmed of History myself, I  
“ have seen how many mistakes, how  
“ many prejudices, may easily be detect-  
“ ed: and though much has been written  
“ on that age, probably truth still remains  
“ to be written of it. Yet I have an  
“ objection to this subject. Though  
“ Charles V. was in a manner the Em-

“ peror of Europe, yet he was a German  
“ or a Spaniard. Consider, Sir, by what  
“ you must have found in writing the  
“ History of Scotland, how difficult it  
“ would be for the most penetrating genius  
“ of another country to give an adequate  
“ idea of Scottish story. So much of all  
“ transactions must take their rise from,  
“ and depend on, national laws, customs,  
“ and ideas, that I am persuaded a native  
“ would always discover great mistakes in  
“ a foreign writer. Greece, indeed, is a  
“ foreign country; but no Greek is alive  
“ to disprove one.

“ There are two other subjects which I  
“ have sometimes had a mind to treat my-  
“ self; though my naming one of them  
“ will tell you why I did not. It was *the*  
“ *History of Learning*. Perhaps, indeed,  
“ it is a work which could not be exe-  
“ cuted unless intended by a young man  
“ from his first looking on a book with  
“ reflection. The other is, the History of  
“ what I may in one light call the most  
“ remarkable period of the world, by  
“ containing a succession of five good

“ Princes: I need not say, they were  
“ Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, and the two  
“ Antonines. Not to mention, that no  
“ part almost of the Roman History has  
“ been well written from the death of  
“ Domitian, this period would be the  
“ fairest pattern for use, if History can  
“ ever effect what she so much pretends  
“ to, doing good. I should be tempted  
“ to call it the *History of Humanity*; for  
“ though Trajan and Adrian had private  
“ vices that disgraced them as men, as  
“ Princes they approached to perfection.  
“ Marcus Aurelius arrived still nearer,  
“ perhaps with a little ostentation; yet  
“ vanity is an amiable machine, if it ope-  
“ rates to benevolence. Antoninus Pius  
“ seems to have been as good as human  
“ nature royalized can be. Adrian’s per-  
“ secution of the Christians would be ob-  
“ jeeted, but then it is much controverted.  
“ I am no admirer of elective monarchies;  
“ and yet it is remarkable, that when  
“ Aurelius’s diadem descended to his natu-  
“ ral heir, not to the heir of his virtues, the  
“ line of beneficence was extinguished; for

“ I am sorry to say, that *hereditary* and  
“ *bad* are almost synonymous.—But I am  
“ sensible, Sir, that I am a bad adviser for  
“ you ; the chastity, the purity, the good  
“ sense and regularity of your manner, that  
“ unity you mention, and of which you  
“ are the greatest master, should not be led  
“ astray by the licentious frankness, and,  
“ I hope, honest indignation of my way  
“ of thinking. I may be a fitter compa-  
“ nion than a guide ; and it is with most  
“ sincere zeal, that I offer myself to con-  
“ tribute any assistance in my power to-  
“ wards polishing your future work, what-  
“ ever it shall be. You want little help ;  
“ I can give little ; and indeed I, who am  
“ taxed with incorrectnesses, should not  
“ assume airs of a corrector. My *Cata-  
“ logue* I intended should have been exact  
“ enough in style : it has not been thought  
“ so by some : I tell you, that you may not  
“ trust me too much. Mr. Gray, a very  
“ perfect judge, has sometimes censured  
“ me for parliamentary phrases, familiar to  
“ me, as your Scotch law is to you. I  
“ might plead for my inaccuracies, that  
“ the

“ the greatest part of my book was written  
“ with people talking in the room ; but  
“ that is no excuse to myself, who in-  
“ tended it for correct. However, it is  
“ easier to remark inaccuracies in the work  
“ of another than in one’s own ; and, since  
“ you command me, I will go again over  
“ your second volume, with an eye to the  
“ slips, a light in which I certainly did not  
“ intend my second examination of it.”

In transcribing some of these paragraphs, as well as in the other extracts I have borrowed from Mr. Walpole’s letters, I must acknowledge, that I have been less influenced by my own private judgment, than by my deference for the partiality which the public has long entertained for this popular and fashionable Writer. Of the literary talents of an author on whom so much flattery has been lavished, it does not become me to speak disrepectfully ; nor would I be understood to detract from his merits in his own peculiar and very limited walk of historical disquisition : but I should be wanting to myself, if I were not to avow, that in the foregoing quota-  
tion,

tion, my object was rather to gratify the curiosity of others, than to record a testimony which I consider as of any importance to Dr. Robertson's fame. The value of praise, besides, whatever be the abilities of him who bestows it, depends on the opinion we entertain of his candour and sincerity; qualities which it will be difficult to allow to Mr. Walpole, after comparing the various passages quoted in this memoir, with the sentiments he expresses on the same subject in his posthumous publication.

For the length of the following extract from a letter of Mr. Hume's, no such apology is necessary. The matter is valuable in itself;—and the objections stated to the age of Charles V. as a subject for history, form the highest possible panegyrick on the abilities of the Writer, by whom the difficulties which appeared so formidable to Mr. Hume, were so successfully surmounted.

“ I have frequently thought, and talked  
“ with our common friends upon the  
“ subject of your letter. There always  
“ occurred

“ occurred to us several difficulties with  
“ regard to every subject we could pro-  
“ pose. The Ancient Greek History has  
“ several recommendations, particularly the  
“ good authors from which it must be  
“ drawn: but this same circumstance be-  
“ comes an objection, when more narrowly  
“ considered: for what can you do in  
“ most places with these authors but tran-  
“ scribe and translate them? No letters or  
“ state-papers from which you could cor-  
“ rect their errors, or authenticate their  
“ narration, or supply their defects. Be-  
“ sides Rollin is so well wrote with re-  
“ spect to style, that with superficial people  
“ it passes for sufficient. There is one Dr.  
“ Leland, who has lately wrote the life  
“ of Philip of Macedon, which is one of  
“ the best periods. The book, they tell  
“ me, is perfectly well wrote; yet it has  
“ had such small sale, and has so little ex-  
“ cited the attention of the public, that  
“ the Author has reason to think his la-  
“ bour thrown away. I have not read the  
“ book; but by the size, I should judge it  
“ to be too particular. It is a pretty large  
“ quarto.

“ quarto. I think a book of that size sufficient for the whole History of Greece till the death of Philip: and I doubt not but such a work would be successful, notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances. The subject is noble, and Rollin is by no means equal to it.

“ I own, I like still less your project of the Age of Charles the Fifth. That subject is disjointed; and your Hero, who is the sole connection, is not very interesting. A competent knowledge at least is required of the state and constitution of the Empire; of the several kingdoms of Spain, of Italy, of the Low Countries; which it would be the work of half a life to acquire; and, though some parts of the story may be entertaining, there would be many dry and barren; and the whole seems not to have any great charms.

“ But I would not willingly start objections to these schemes, unless I had something to propose, which would be plausible; and I shall mention to you an idea which has sometimes pleased me,

“ me, and which I had once entertained  
“ thoughts of attempting. You may ob-  
“ serve that among modern readers, Plu-  
“ tarch is in every translation the chief  
“ favourite of the Ancients. Numberless  
“ translations, and numberless editions have  
“ been made of him in all languages;  
“ and no translation has been so ill done  
“ as not to be successful. Though those  
“ who read the originals never put him  
“ in comparison either with Thucydides  
“ or Xenophon, he always attaches more  
“ the reader in the translation; a proof  
“ that the idea and execution of his work  
“ is, in the main, happy. Now, I would  
“ have you think of writing modern lives,  
“ somewhat after that manner: not to  
“ enter into a detail of the actions, but  
“ to mark the manners of the great Per-  
“ sonages, by domestic stories, by remark-  
“ able sayings, and by a general sketch of  
“ their lives and adventures. You see that  
“ in Plutarch the life of Cæsar may be read  
“ in half an hour. Were you to write  
“ the life of Henry the Fourth of France  
“ after that model, you might pillage all  
“ the

“the pretty stories in Sully, and speak  
“more of his mistresses than of his  
“battles. In short, you might gather the  
“flower of all Modern History in this  
“manner: The remarkable Popes, the  
“Kings of Sweden, the great discoverers  
“and conquerors of the New World;  
“even the eminent men of letters might  
“furnish you with matter, and the quick  
“dispatch of every different work would  
“encourage you to begin a new one. If  
“one volume were successful, you might  
“compose another at your leisure, and  
“the field is inexhaustible. There are  
“persons whom you might meet with in  
“the corners of History, so to speak, who  
“would be a subject of entertainment  
“quite unexpected; and as long as you  
“live, you might give and receive amuse-  
“ment by such a work. Even your son,  
“if he had a talent for history, would  
“succeed to the subject, and his son to  
“him. I shall insist no farther on this  
“idea; because, if it strikes your fancy,  
“you will easily perceive all its advan-  
“tages,

“tages, and, by farther thought, all its  
“difficulties.”

---

After much deliberation, Dr. Robertson resolved to undertake the History of Charles V.—a determination not less fortunate for the public than for his own fame; as it engaged him, unexpectedly perhaps, in a train of researches not confined to the period, or to the quarter of the globe that he had originally in view; but which, opening as he advanced, new and more magnificent prospects, attracted his curiosity to two of the greatest and most interesting subjects of speculation in the History of Human Affairs;—the enterprises of modern ambition in the Western World, and the traces of ancient wisdom and arts existing in the East.

The progress of the work, however, was interrupted for some time, about a year after its commencement, by certain circumstances which induced him to listen more favourably than formerly to the entreaties

entreaties of those friends who urged him to attempt a History of England. The motives that weighed with him on this occasion are fully explained in a correspondence still extant, in which there are various particulars tending to illustrate his character and his literary views.

From a letter of the late Lord Cathcart to Dr. Robertson, (dated 20th July 1761,) the revival of this project would appear to have originated in a manner not a little flattering to the vanity of an author.

..... "Lord Bute told me the King's  
"thoughts, as well as his own, with re-  
"spect to your History of Scotland, and a  
"wish his Majesty had expressed to see a  
"History of England by your pen. His  
"Lordship assured me, every source of  
"information which Government can  
"command would be opened to you; and  
"that great, laborious, and extensive as  
"the work must be, he would take care  
"your encouragement should be propor-  
"tioned to it. He seemed to be aware of  
"some objections you once had, founded  
"on the apprehension of clashing or inter-  
"fering

“ fering with Mr. David Hume who is  
“ your friend; but as your performance  
“ and his will be upon plans so different  
“ from each other, and as *his* will, in  
“ point of time, have so much the start  
“ of yours, these objections did not seem  
“ to him such as, upon reflection, were  
“ likely to continue to have much weight  
“ with you. . . . .

“ . . . . . “ I must add, that though I  
“ did not think it right to enquire particu-  
“ larly into Lord Bute’s intentions before  
“ I knew a little of your mind, it appeared  
“ to me plain, that they were higher than  
“ any views which can open to you in  
“ Scotland, and which, I believe, he  
“ would think inconsistent with the atten-  
“ tion the other subject would necessarily  
“ require.” . . . . .

A paper which has been accidentally  
preserved among the letters addressed to  
Dr. Robertson by his friends, enables me  
to state his sentiments with respect to the  
foregoing proposal, in his own words. It  
is in Dr. Robertson’s hand-writing, and is  
marked on the back as “ An imperfect

“ Sketch of his Answer to Lord Cathcart’s  
“ letter of July 20th.” The following ex-  
tracts contain all those parts of it which  
are connected with the project of the Eng-  
lish History.

• . . . . “ After the first publication of  
“ the History of Scotland, and the favour-  
“ able reception it met with, I had both  
“ very tempting offers from booksellers,  
“ and very confident assurances of public  
“ encouragement, if I would undertake the  
“ History of England. But as Mr. Hume,  
“ with whom, notwithstanding the con-  
“ trariety of our sentiments both in reli-  
“ gion and politics, I live in great friend-  
“ ship, was at that time in the middle of  
“ the subject, no consideration of interest  
“ or reputation would induce me to break  
“ in upon a field of which he had taken  
“ prior possession ; and I determined that  
“ my interference with him should never  
“ be any obstruction to the sale or success  
“ of his work. Nor do I yet repent my  
“ having resisted many solicitations to alter  
“ this resolution. But the case I now  
“ think is entirely changed. His History  
“ will

“ will have been published several years  
“ before any work of mine on the same  
“ subject can appear; its first run will not  
“ be marred by any justling with me, and  
“ it will have taken that station in the  
“ literary system which belongs to it. This  
“ objection, therefore, which I thought,  
“ and still think, so weighty at that time,  
“ makes no impression on me at present,  
“ and I can now justify my undertaking  
“ the English History to myself, to the  
“ world, and to him. Besides, our man-  
“ ner of viewing the same subject is so  
“ different or peculiar, that (as was the case  
“ in our last books) both may maintain  
“ their own rank, have their own parti-  
“ fans, and possess their own merit, with-  
“ out hurting each other.

“ I am sensible how extensive and  
“ laborious the undertaking is, and that I  
“ could not propose to execute it in the  
“ manner I could wish, and the public will  
“ expect, unless I shall be enabled to con-  
“ secrate my whole time and industry to  
“ it. Though I am not weary of my pro-  
“ fession, nor wish ever to throw off my

“ ecclesiastical character, yet I have often  
“ wished to be free of the labour of daily  
“ preaching, and to have it in my power  
“ to apply myself wholly to my studies.  
“ This the encouragement your Lordship  
“ mentions will put in my power. But as  
“ my chief residence must still be in Scot-  
“ land, where I would choose, both for  
“ my own sake and that of my family, to  
“ live and to compose; as a visit of three  
“ or four months now and then to England  
“ will be fully sufficient for consulting such  
“ manuscripts as have never been published;  
“ I should not wish to drop all connection  
“ with the church of which I am a mem-  
“ ber, but still to hold some station in it,  
“ without being reduced entirely to the  
“ profession of an Author.

“ Another circumstance must be men-  
“ tioned to your Lordship. As I have  
“ begun the History of Charles V. and  
“ have above one-third of it finished, I  
“ would not choose to lose what I have  
“ done. It will take at least two years to  
“ bring that work to perfection; and after  
“ that I shall begin the other, which was

“ my first choice, long before Mr. Hume  
“ undertook it, though I was then too dif-  
“ fident of myself, and too idle to make any  
“ progress in the execution of it, farther  
“ than forming some general ideas as to  
“ the manner in which it should be pro-  
“ secuted.

“ As to the establishment to be made in  
“ my favour, it would ill become me to say  
“ any thing. Whether the present time  
“ be a proper one for settling the matter  
“ finally I know not. I beg leave only to  
“ say, that however much I may wish  
“ to have a point fixed so much for my  
“ honour, and which will give such stabi-  
“ lity to all my future schemes, I am not  
“ impatient to enter into possession, before I  
“ can set to work with that particular task  
“ for which my appointments are to be  
“ given.”

In a letter addressed to Mr. Baron Mure, (dated Nov. 25, 1761,) Dr. Robertson has explained himself still more fully on some points touched on in the forgoing correspondence.

“ I need say no more of my reasons for  
“ not undertaking the History of England  
“ immediately after the publication of my  
“ last book, or the circumstances which  
“ induce me to think that I may now  
“ engage in it with propriety. These I  
“ have already explained, and I hope they  
“ are approved of. The only thing about  
“ which I have any difficulty is, the pro-  
“ posal of my residing in London with  
“ my family during the time I shall be  
“ employed in my intended work. If  
“ such a prospect had opened to me a  
“ dozen of years ago, I should have  
“ reckoned it a very fortunate accident,  
“ and would have embraced it without  
“ hesitation. But, at my time of life,  
“ accustomed to the manners of my own  
“ country, and living with ease and credit  
“ and in good company here, I am un-  
“ willing to think of entering upon new  
“ habits, of forming new connections and  
“ friendships, and of mingling with a  
“ society which, by what I have seen of  
“ it, I do not relish so much as that to  
“ which I am more familiar. This is the  
“ light

“ light in which, if I were still a single  
“ man, I must have viewed the matter.  
“ But in my present situation, with a wife  
“ and four children, my difficulties in-  
“ crease ; and I must consider not only  
“ what would be agreeable to myself, but  
“ what may be of advantage to them.  
“ You know how greatly the expence of  
“ house-keeping at London exceeds that at  
“ Edinburgh, and how much the charge of  
“ educating children increases. You know  
“ with what ease women of a middling  
“ fortune mingle with good company in  
“ Edinburgh ; how impossible that is in  
“ London ; and even how great the ex-  
“ pence is of their having any proper  
“ society at all. As I happen to have  
“ three daughters, these circumstances must  
“ occur to me, and have their own weight.  
“ Besides this, if it shall please God to  
“ spare my life a few years, I shall be  
“ able to leave my family, if it continue in  
“ Scotland, in a situation more independent  
“ than I could ever expect from any suc-  
“ cess or encouragement, if they shall settle  
“ in England.

..... " Were I to carve out my  
" own fortune, I should wish to continue  
" one of his Majesty's Chaplains for Scot-  
" land, but to resign my charge as a  
" Minister of Edinburgh, which engrosses  
" more of my time than one who is a  
" stranger to the many minute duties of  
" that office can well imagine. I would  
" wish to apply my whole time to literary  
" pursuits, which is at present parcelled  
" out among innumerable occupations. In  
" order to enable me to make this resig-  
" nation, some appointment must be  
" assigned me for life. What that should  
" be, it neither becomes me, nor do I pre-  
" tend to say. One thing, however, I wish  
" with some earnestness, that the thing  
" might be executed soon, both as it will  
" give me great vigour in my studies to  
" have my future fortune ascertained in  
" such an honourable manner, and because,  
" by allowing me to apply myself wholly  
" to my present work, it will enable me to  
" finish it in less time, and to begin so much  
" the sooner to my new task."

In

In what manner this plan, after being so far advanced, came to be finally abandoned, I have not been able to discover. The letters from which the foregoing extracts are taken, seem to have been preserved by mere accident; and after the date of the last, I find a blank till 1763 in Dr. Robertson's correspondence with Lord Cathcart. Some letters which passed between them about that time are now in my possession. They relate chiefly to a scheme which was then in agitation, and which was soon after accomplished, of reviving in Dr. Robertson's favour the office of Historiographer for Scotland; but from various incidental passages in them, it appears clearly that he still looked forwards to a History of England as the next subject he was to undertake after that of Charles V. It is not impossible, that the resignation of Lord Bute in 1764 may have contributed somewhat to alter his views, by imposing on him the necessity of a new negotiation through a different channel. The History of Charles V. besides, employed him much longer than he

he foresaw; partly in consequence of his avocations as Principal of the University, and partly of those arising from his connection with the church, in which, at that period, faction ran high. In the execution too of this work, he found that the transactions relating to America, which he had originally intended as the subject of an episode, were of such magnitude as to require a separate narrative: and when at last he had brought to a termination the long and various labours in which he was thus involved, his health was too much impaired, and his life too far advanced, to allow him to think of an undertaking so vast in itself, and which Mr. Hume had already executed with so splendid and so merited a reputation.

The delays which retarded the publication of the History of Charles V. together with the Author's established popularity as a writer, had raised the curiosity of the public to a high pitch before that work appeared; and perhaps there never was a book, unconnected with the circumstances of the times, that was expected with more general

general impatience. It is unnecessary for me to say, that these expectations were not disappointed ; nor would it be worth while to swell this memoir with a repetition of the *eulogiums* lavished on the Author in the literary journals of the day. The sentiments of his own personal friends, as expressed in the openness and confidence of a private epistolary correspondence, cannot fail to be more interesting ; and I shall accordingly, on this, as on other occasions, avail myself of whatever passages in his papers appear to me to be useful, either for illustrating his literary progress, or his habits and connections in private life.

The paragraphs which immediately follow are part of a letter from Mr. Hume, without any date ; but written, as appears from the contents, while the History of Charles V. was still in the press. The levity of the style forms such a striking contrast to the character which this grave and philosophical Historian sustains in his publications, that I have sometimes hesitated about the propriety of subjecting to the criticisms of the world so careless an effusion of gaiety and

and affection. I trust, however, that to some it will not be wholly uninteresting to enjoy a glimpse of the Writer and his correspondent in the habits of private intercourse; and that to them the playful and good-natured irony of Mr. Hume will suggest not unpleasing pictures of the hours which they borrowed from business and study. Dr. Robertson used frequently to say, that in Mr. Hume's gaiety there was something which approached to *infantine*; and that he had found the same thing so often exemplified in the circle of his other friends, that he was almost disposed to consider it as characteristical of genius. It has certainly lent an amiable grace to some of the most favourite names in Ancient Story.

---

Atqui

Primores Populi arripuit, Populumque tributim—  
Quin ubi se a vulgo et scenâ in secreta remorant  
Virtus Scipiadæ et mitis sapientia Læli,  
Nugari cum illo et discincti ludere, donec  
Decoqueretur olus, soliti.—

“ I got yesterday from Strahan about  
“ thirty sheets of your History to be sent  
“ over

“ over to Suard, and last night and this  
“ morning have run them over with great  
“ avidity. I could not deny myself the  
“ satisfaction (which I hope also will not  
“ displease you) of expressing presently my  
“ extreme approbation of them. To say  
“ only they are very well written, is by  
“ far too faint an expression, and much  
“ inferior to the sentiments I feel: they  
“ are composed with nobleness, with dig-  
“ nity, with elegance, and with judgment,  
“ to which there are few equals. They  
“ even excel, and, I think, in a sensible  
“ degree, your History of Scotland. I  
“ propose to myself great pleasure in being  
“ the only man in England, during some  
“ months, who will be in the situation of  
“ doing you justice, after which you may  
“ certainly expect that my voice will be  
“ drowned in that of the public.

“ You know that you and I have always  
“ been on the footing of finding in each  
“ other’s productions *something to blame*,  
“ and *something to commend*; and therefore  
“ you may perhaps expect also some fea-  
“ soning of the former kind; but really  
“ neither

“ neither my leisure nor inclination allowed  
“ me to make such remarks, and I sincerely  
“ believe you have afforded me very small  
“ materials for them. However, such par-  
“ ticulars as occur to my memory I shall  
“ mention. *Maltreat* is a Scotticism which  
“ occurs once. What the devil had you  
“ to do with that old-fashioned dangling  
“ word *wherewith*? I should as soon take  
“ back *whereupon*, *whereunto*, and *where-*  
“ *withal*. I think the only tolerable,  
“ decent gentleman of the family is  
“ *wherein*; and I should not chuse to be  
“ often seen in his company. But I know  
“ your affection for *wherewith* proceeds  
“ from your partiality to Dean Swift,  
“ whom I can often laugh with, whose  
“ style I can even approve, but surely can  
“ never admire. It has no harmony, no  
“ eloquence, no ornament; and not much  
“ correctness, whatever the English may  
“ imagine. Were not their literature still  
“ in a somewhat barbarous state, that  
“ Author’s place would not be so high  
“ among their classics. But what a fancy  
“ is this you have taken of saying always

“ *an*

“ *an hand, an heart, an head?* Have you  
“ *an ear?* Do you not know that this (n)  
“ is added before vowels to prevent the  
“ Cacophony, and ought never to take  
“ place before (h) when that letter is  
“ sounded? It is never pronounced in these  
“ words: why should it be wrote? Thus,  
“ I should say, a *history*, and an *historian*;  
“ and so would you too, if you had any  
“ sense. But you tell me, that Swift does  
“ otherwise. To be sure there is no reply  
“ to that; and we must swallow your *bath*  
“ too upon the same authority. I will see  
“ you d——d sooner.—But I will endea-  
“ vour to keep my temper.

“ I do not like this sentence in page  
“ 149. *This step was taken in consequence*  
“ *of the treaty Wolsey had concluded with*  
“ *the Emperor at Brussels, and which had*  
“ *hitherto been kept secret.* Si sic omnia  
“ dixisses, I should never have been  
“ plagued with hearing your praises so  
“ often sounded, and that fools preferred  
“ your style to mine. Certainly it had been  
“ better to have said, *which Wolsey, &c.*  
“ That relative ought very seldom to be  
“ omitted,

“ omitted, and is here particularly requisite  
“ to preserve a symmetry between the two  
“ members of the sentence. You omit the  
“ relative too often, which is a colloquial  
“ barbarism, as Mr. Johnson calls it.

“ Your periods are sometimes, though  
“ not often, too long. Suard will be  
“ embarrassed with them, as the modish  
“ French style runs into the other ex-  
“ treme.” . . . . \*

• • • • • • • • •

Another letter of Mr. Hume's, (dated 28th March 1769,) relates to the same subject. “ I find then that you are not

\* Considering the critical attention which Mr. Hume appears to have given to the *minutiae* of style, it is somewhat surprising that he should himself fail so frequently both in purity and grammatical correctness. In these respects, his historical compositions will not bear a comparison with those of Dr. Robertson; although they abound, in every page, with what Mr. Gibbon calls “ careless, inimitable beauties.” In his familiar letters the inaccuracies are more numerous than might have been expected from one accustomed so much to write with a view to publication; nor are these negligences *always* compensated by that happy lightness and ease which he seems to have been studious to attain.

“ con-

“contented without a particular detail of  
“your own praises, and that the very short  
“but pithy letter I wrote you gives you  
“no satisfaction. But what can I say more?  
“The success has answered my expect-  
“ations: and I, who converse with the  
“Great, the Fair, and the Learned, have  
“scarcely heard an opposite voice, or even  
“whisper, to the general sentiment. Only  
“I have heard that the Sanhedrim at Mrs.  
“Macaulay’s condemns you as little less a  
“friend to Government and Monarchy  
“than myself.” . . . . .

Mr. Walpole’s congratulations on this occasion were no less warm than Mr. Hume’s; but as they are expressed in more general terms, they do not supply materials equally interesting for a quotation. The only letter, besides, from Mr. Walpole relative to Charles V. that has come into my hands, was written before he had proceeded farther in the perusal than the first volume. What the impressions were which that part of the work had left upon his mind, may be judged of from the following paragraph:

“ Give me leave, Sir, without flattery,  
“ to observe to yourself, what is very  
“ natural to say to others. You are almost  
“ the single, certainly the greatest instance,  
“ that sound parts and judgment can attain  
“ every perfection of a writer, though it  
“ be buried in the privacy of retired life  
“ and deep study. You have neither the  
“ prejudices of a recluse, nor want any of  
“ the taste of a man of the world. Nor is  
“ this polished ease confined to your works,  
“ which parts and imitation might possibly  
“ seize. In the few hours I passed with  
“ you last summer I was struck with your  
“ familiar acquaintance with men, and  
“ with every topic of conversation. Of  
“ your Scottish History I have often said,  
“ that it seemed to me to have been written  
“ by an able Ambassador, who had seen  
“ much of affairs. I do not expect to find  
“ less of that penetration in your Charles.  
“ Why should I not say thus much to  
“ you? Why should the language of flat-  
“ tery forbid truth to speak its mind,  
“ merely because flattery has stolen truth’s  
“ expressions? Why should you be de-  
“ prived

“ prived of the satisfaction of hearing the  
“ impression your merit has made? You  
“ have sense enough to be conscious that  
“ you deserve what I have said; and  
“ though modesty will forbid you to sub-  
“ scribe to it, justice to me and to my  
“ character, which was never that of a flat-  
“ terer, will oblige you silently to feel, that  
“ I can have no motive but that of paying  
“ homage to superior abilities.”

Lord Lyttleton was another correspondent with whom Dr. Robertson had occasional communications. The first of his letters was an acknowledgment to him for a present of Charles V.; and is valuable on account of its coincidence with a letter of Mr. Hume's formerly quoted, in which he recommended to Dr. Robertson to write lives in the manner of Plutarch.

“ I don't wonder that your sense of the  
“ public expectation gives you some apprehensions; but I know that the Historian  
“ of Mary Queen of Scots cannot fail to  
“ do justice to any great subject; and no  
“ greater can be found in the records of  
“ mankind than this you have now

“ chosen. Go on, dear Sir, to enrich the  
“ English language with more tracts of  
“ modern History. We have nothing good  
“ in that way, except what relates to the  
“ island of Great Britain. You have talents  
“ and youth enough to undertake the agree-  
“ able and useful task of giving us all the  
“ lives of the most illustrious Princes who  
“ have flourished since the age of Charles V.  
“ in every part of the world, and com-  
“ paring them together, as Plutarch has  
“ done the most celebrated Heroes of  
“ Greece and Rome. This will diffuse  
“ your glory as a Writer farther than any  
“ other work. All nations will have an  
“ equal interest in it; and feel a gratitude  
“ to the stranger who takes pains to im-  
“ mortalize the virtues of those to whom  
“ he is only related by the general sympa-  
“ thy of sentiment and esteem. Plutarch  
“ was a Greek, which made him less im-  
“ partial between his countrymen and the  
“ Romans in weighing their comparative  
“ merit, than you would be in contrasting  
“ a Frenchman with a German, or an  
“ Italian with a Spaniard, or a Dutchman  
“ with

“ with a Swede. Select, therefore, those  
 “ great men out of different countries,  
 “ whose characters and actions may be  
 “ best compared together, and present them  
 “ to our view, without that disguise which  
 “ the partiality of their countrymen or the  
 “ malice of their enemies may have thrown  
 “ upon them. If I can animate you to  
 “ this, posterity will owe me a very great  
 “ obligation.”

I shall close these extracts with a short letter from Voltaire, dated 26th February 1770, from the *Chateau de Ferney*.

“ Il y a quatre jours que j'ai reçu le  
 “ beau présent dont vous m'avez honoré.  
 “ Je le lis malgré les fluxions horribles  
 “ qui me font craindre de perdre entière-  
 “ ment les yeux. Il me fait oublier tous  
 “ mes maux. C'est à vous et à M. Hume  
 “ qu'il appartient d'écrire l'Histoire. Vous  
 “ êtes éloquent, savant, et impartial. Je  
 “ me joins à l'Europe pour vous estimer.”

While Dr. Robertson's fame was thus rapidly extending wherever the language in which he wrote was understood and cultivated, he had the singular good fortune to find in M. Suard, a writer fully capable of transfusing into a language still more universal, all the spirit and elegance of the original. It appears from a letter preserved among Dr. Robertson's papers, that M. Suard was selected for this undertaking, by the well-known Baron d'Holbach. He has since made ample additions to his fame by his own productions; but, if I am not mistaken, it was his translation of Charles V. which first established his reputation, and procured him a seat in the French Academy \*.

The high rank which this second publication of Dr. Robertson's has long maintained in the list of our English Classics, is sufficient to justify the warm encomiums I have already transcribed from the letters of his friends. To the general ex-

• Appendix, Note D.

pressions

pressions of praise, however, which they have bestowed on it, I shall take the liberty of adding a few remarks on some of those specific excellencies by which it appears to me to be more peculiarly distinguished.

Among these excellencies, a most important one arises from the address displayed by the Author in surmounting a difficulty, which has embarrassed, more or less, all the Historians who have attempted to record the transactions of the two last centuries. In consequence of those relations which connect together the different countries of modern Europe as parts of one great system, a general knowledge of the contemporary situation of other nations becomes indispensable to those who would fully comprehend the political transactions of any one state at a particular period. In writing the history of a great nation, accordingly, it is necessary to connect with the narrative, occasional episodes with respect to such foreign affairs as had an influence on the policy of the Government, or on the fortunes of the people. To ac-

complish this with success, by bestowing on these digressions, perspicuity and interest, without entering into that minuteness of detail which might mislead the attention of the reader from the principal subject, is unquestionably one of the most difficult tasks of an Historian; and in executing this task, Dr. Robertson's judgment and skill will not suffer by a comparison with those displayed by the most illustrious of his rivals.

In the work, however, now under our consideration, he has aimed at something more; for while he has recorded, with admirable distinctness, the transactions of a particular reign, (preserving his episodes in so just a subordination to his main design, that they seldom produce any inconvenient distraction of attention or of interest,) he has contrived, by happy transitions, to interweave so many of the remarkable events which happened about the same time in other parts of Europe, as to render his History of Charles V. the most instructive introduction that has yet appeared to the general history of that age.

age. The advantage of making the transactions of a particular nation, and still more the reign of a particular sovereign, a ground-work for such comprehensive views of human affairs, is sufficiently obvious. By carrying on a connected series of important events, and indicating their relations to the contemporary history of mankind, a *meridian* is traced (if I may use the expression,) through the vast and crowded map of time; and a line of reference is exhibited to the mind, for marking the bearings of those subordinate occurrences, in the multiplicity of which its powers would have been lost.

In undertaking a work on a plan so philosophical in the design, but so difficult in the execution, no period, perhaps, in the history of the world, could have been more happily chosen than that which commences with the sixteenth century; in the course of which, (as he himself observes,) "the several powers of Europe were "formed into one great political system, "in which each took a station, wherein "it has since remained with less altera-  
"tion

“tion than could have been expected, after  
“the shocks occasioned by so many in-  
“ternal revolutions and so many foreign  
“wars.”

Mr. Hume, in a letter which I had occasion already to quote, objects to him that “his Hero is not very interesting,” and it must undoubtedly be acknowledged, that the characteristical qualities of his mind were less those of an amiable man than of a great Prince. His character, however, on the whole, was singularly adapted to Dr. Robertson’s purpose; not only as the ascendant it secured to him in the political world marks him out indisputably as the principal figure in that illustrious groupe which then appeared on the Theatre of Europe, but as it everywhere displays that deep and sagacious policy, which, by systematizing his counsels, and linking together the great events of his reign, inspires a constant interest, if not for the personal fortunes of the man, at least for the magnificent projects of the politician.—Nor is the character of Charles, however unamiable, without a certain species of attraction.

The

The reader who is previously acquainted with the last scenes of his enterprising and brilliant life, while he follows him through the splendid career of his ambition, can scarcely avoid to indulge occasionally those moral sympathies which the contrast awakens; and to borrow from the solitude of the cloister some prophetic touches, to soften the sternness of the Warrior and the Statesman.

With a view to facilitate the study of this important portion of modern history, Dr. Robertson has employed a preliminary volume in tracing the progress of society in Europe, from the subversion of the Roman Empire to the æra at which his narrative commences. In this instance, as well as in the first book of his Scottish History, he has sanctioned by his example a remark of Father Paul, that an historical composition should be as complete as possible in itself; exhibiting a series of events intelligible to every reader, without any reference to other sources of information. On the minuteness and accuracy of Dr. Robertson's researches concerning the state

of Europe during the middle ages, I do not presume to offer an opinion. They certainly exhibit marks of very extensive and various reading, digested with the soundest judgment; and of which the results appear to be arranged in the most distinct and luminous order. At the time when he wrote, such an arrangement of materials was the grand *desideratum*, and by far the most arduous task; nor will the merit of having first brought into form a mass of information so little accessible till then to ordinary readers, be ever affected by the controversies that may arise concerning the justness of particular conclusions. If, in some of these, he has been censured as hasty by later writers, it must be remembered how much their labours were facilitated by what he did to open a field for their minuter diligence; and that, by the scrupulous exactness with which he refers to his authorities, he has himself furnished the means of correcting his errors. One thing is certain, (and it affords no inconsiderable testimony both to the felicity of his choice in the various historical subjects he undertook,

took, and to the extent of his researches in the investigation of facts,) that the most acute and able of all his adversaries\* was guided by Dr. Robertson's example in almost all his literary undertakings; and that his curiosity has seldom led him into any path, where the genius and industry of his predecessor had not previously cleared the way.

In no part of Dr. Robertson's works has he displayed more remarkably than in this introductory volume, his patience in research; his penetration and good sense in selecting his information; or that comprehension of mind, which, without being misled by system, can combine, with distinctness and taste, the dry and scattered details of antient monuments. In truth, this Dissertation, under the unassuming title of an Introduction to the History of Charles V. may be regarded as an introduction to the History of Modern Europe. It is invaluable, in this respect, to the historical student; and it suggests, in every page,

\* Dr. Gilbert Stuart.

matter of speculation to the politician and the philosopher.

It will not, I hope, be imputed to me as a blameable instance of national vanity, if I conclude this Section with remarking the rapid progress that has been made in our own country during the last fifty years, in tracing the origin and progress of the present establishments in Europe. Montesquieu undoubtedly led the way; but much has been done since the publication of his works, by authors whose names are enrolled among the members of this society. “On this interesting subject,” (says Mr. Gibbon,) “a strong ray of philosophic light has broke from Scotland in our own times; and it is with private as well as public regard, that I repeat the names of Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith \*.” It was, indeed, a subject worthy of their genius; for, in the whole history of human affairs, no spectacle occurs so wonderful in itself, or so momentous in its effects, as the growth of that system which took its rise from the conquests

\* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. lxi.

of the Barbarians. In consequence of these, the western parts of Europe were overspread with a thick night of superstition and ignorance, which lasted nearly a thousand years ; yet this event, which had at first so unpromising an aspect, laid the foundation of a state of society far more favourable to the general and permanent happiness of the human race than any which the world had hitherto seen ;—a state of society which required many ages to bring it to that condition which it has now attained, and which will probably require ages more to bestow on it all the perfection of which it seems to be gradually susceptible. By dividing Europe into a number of large monarchies, agreeing with each other in their fundamental institutions, but differing in the nature both of their moral and physical advantages ; and possessing, at the same time, such measures of relative force as to render them objects of mutual respect ; it multiplied the chances of human improvement ;—secured a mutual communication of lights among vast political communities, all of them fitted to contribute

their

their respective shares to the common stock of knowledge and refinement:—and sheltered science and civilization, till they had time to strike their roots so deep, and to scatter their seeds so wide, that their final progress over the whole globe can now be checked only by some calamity fatal to the species.

SECTION III.

*Continuation of the same Subject.—  
HISTORY OF AMERICA.*

AFTER an interval of eight years from the publication of Charles the Fifth, Dr. Robertson produced the History of America;—a work which, by the variety of research and of speculation that it exhibits, enables us to form a sufficient idea of the manner in which he had employed the intervening period.

In undertaking this task, the Author's original intention was only to complete his account of the great events connected with the reign of Charles V.; but perceiving, as he advanced, that a History of America, confined solely to the operations and concerns of the Spaniards, would not be likely to excite a very general interest, he resolved to include in his plan the transactions of

all the European nations in the New World. The origin and progress of the British Empire there, he destined for the subject of one entire volume; but afterwards abandoned, or rather suspended the execution of this part of his design, for reasons mentioned in his Preface.

In the view which I have hitherto given of Dr. Robertson's literary pursuits, I have endeavoured not only to glean all the scanty information which his papers supply, concerning the progress of his studies, but to collect whatever memorials they afford of his intercourse with those, to whom he appears to have been more peculiarly attached by sentiments of esteem or of friendship. In following this plan, while I have attempted (in conformity to the precept of an eloquent Critic \*) to add to the interest of my narrative "by surrounding the subject of it with his Contemporaries," I have aimed also to select such passages from the letters of his correspondents, as were at once calculated to illustrate

\* Abbé Maury.

the characters of the writers, and to reflect some light on that of the person to whom they are addressed. It appeared to me to be possible to convey in this manner a livelier and juster idea of the more delicate features of their minds, than by any description however circumstantial; and at the same time, to avoid, by a proper discrimination in the selection of materials, those frivolous or degrading details, which, in the present times, are so frequently presented to the public by the indiscretion of editors. The epistolary fragments, accordingly, interwoven with my own composition have all a reference to the peculiar object of this Memoir; and I cannot help indulging a hope, that they will amply compensate, by the value they possess as authentic relics of the individuals whose friendships they record, for the trespasses they have occasioned against that unity of style which the rules of criticism enjoin.

In the farther prosecution of this subject, I shall adhere to the same general plan; without, however, affecting that minuteness

of illustration which I was anxious to bestow on the first steps of Dr. Robertson's literary progress. The circle of his acquaintance, besides, was now so extended, and the congratulations which his works drew to him so multiplied, that my choice must necessarily be limited to the letters of those whose names render their judgments of men and books objects of public curiosity. The Society will regret with me, that among these correspondents the name of Mr. Hume is not to be found. He died in the year 1776; the year immediately preceding that in which the History of America was published \*.

Mr. Gibbon made his first appearance as an Historian a few months before Mr. Hume's death, and began a correspondence with Dr. Robertson the year following. A letter, dated from Paris, 14th July 1777, in acknowledgment of a present of Dr. Robertson's book, appears plainly from the contents to have been one of the first that passed between them.

\* Appendix, Note E.

“ When

“ When I ventured to assume the character of Historian, the first, the most natural, but at the same time the most ambitious wish which I entertained was “ to deserve the approbation of Dr. Robertson and Mr. Hume, two names which “ friendship united, and which posterity “ will never separate. I shall not therefore “ attempt to dissemble, though I cannot “ easily express, the honest pleasure which “ I received from your obliging letter, as “ well as from the intelligence of your “ most valuable present. The satisfaction “ which I should otherwise have enjoyed “ in common with the public, will now be “ heightened by a sentiment of a more “ personal and flattering nature; and I “ shall often whisper to myself that I have “ in some degree obtained the esteem of the “ Writer whom I admire.

“ A short excursion which I have made “ to this place during the summer months, “ has occasioned some delay in my receiving “ your letter, and will prevent me “ from possessing, till my return, the copy

“ of your History, which you so politely  
“ desired Mr. Strahan to send me. But  
“ I have already gratified the eagerness  
“ of my curiosity and impatience; and  
“ though I was obliged to return the book  
“ much sooner than I could have wished,  
“ I have seen enough to convince me that  
“ the present publication will support, and,  
“ if possible, extend the fame of the Au-  
“ thor; that the materials are collected  
“ with care, and arranged with skill; that  
“ the progress of discovery is displayed  
“ with learning and perspicuity; that the  
“ dangers, the achievements, and the  
“ views of the Spanish adventurers, are  
“ related with a temperate spirit; and that  
“ the most original, perhaps the most  
“ curious portion of human manners, is  
“ at length rescued from the hands of  
“ sophists and declaimers. Lord Stormont,  
“ and the few in this capital who have had  
“ an opportunity of perusing the History  
“ of America, unanimously concur in the  
“ same sentiments; your work is already  
“ become a favourite subject of conversa-  
“ tion,

“tion, and M. Suard is repeatedly pressed,  
“in my hearing, to fix the time when his  
“translation will appear\*.”

In most of the other letters received by Dr. Robertson on this occasion, I have not remarked any thing very interesting. Mr. Walpole is liberal, as formerly, in his praise, but does not enter so much into particular criticisms; and as for his other correspondents (among whom were various names of the first distinction in the kingdom,) the greater part of them were probably restrained, by motives of delicacy, from offering any thing more than general expressions of admiration, to a Writer whose fame was now so fully established. A letter from William Lord Mansfield, though it bears no marks of the superior mind of that eminent man, is valuable at least as a testimony of his respect for Dr. Robertson: nor

\* The letter from which the foregoing passage is extracted has been already published by Lord Sheffield in the posthumous works of Mr. Gibbon. As the copy found among Dr. Robertson's papers corresponds *verbatim* with that which Mr. Gibbon appears to have retained in his own possession, it affords a proof of the care which he bestowed on his epistolary compositions.

will it, perhaps, when contrasted with the splendor of his professional exertions, be altogether unacceptable to those who have a pleasure in studying the varieties and the limits of human genius.

“ I delayed returning you my warmest  
“ acknowledgments for your most valuable  
“ present, till I could say that I had enjoyed  
“ it. Since my return from the circuit I  
“ have read it with infinite pleasure. It  
“ is inferior to none of your works, which  
“ is saying a great deal. No man will now  
“ doubt but that you have done judiciously  
“ in making this an entire separate work,  
“ and detaching it from the general History.  
“ Your account of the science of Naviga-  
“ tion and Naval discovery is admirable,  
“ and equal to any Historical Map of the  
“ kind. If I knew a pen equal to it, I  
“ would advise the continuation down to  
“ the next arrival of Captain Cook.  
“ Nothing could be more entertaining or  
“ more instructive. It is curious that all  
“ great discoveries are made, as it were by  
“ accident, when men are in search of  
“ something else. I learn from you that  
“ Columbus

“ Columbus did not, as a philosopher, demonstrate to himself that there must be such a portion of the earth as America is, but that meaning to go to the East Indies, he stumbled on the West. It is a more interesting speculation to consider how little political wisdom had to do, and how much has arisen from chance, in the peopling, government, laws, and constitution of the New World. You shew it strongly in the revolutions and settlement of Spanish America. I hope the time will come for fulfilling the engagement you allude to in the beginning of the preface. You will then shew how little political wisdom had to do in forming the original settlements of English America. Government left private adventurers to do as they pleased, and certainly did not see in any degree the consequence of the object.”

One letter containing the judgment of an Author who is supposed to have employed his own abilities in a very masterly sketch on the same subject, I shall publish entire.

entire. It is long for a quotation; but I will not mutilate what comes from the pen of Mr. Burke.

“ I am perfectly sensible of the very  
“ flattering distinction I have received in  
“ your thinking me worthy of so noble a  
“ present as that of your History of Amer-  
“ ica. I have, however, suffered my gra-  
“ titude to lie under some suspicion, by  
“ delaying my acknowledgment of so great  
“ a favour. But my delay was only to  
“ render my obligation to you more com-  
“ plete, and my thanks, if possible, more  
“ merited. The close of the session brought  
“ a great deal of very troublesome, though  
“ not important business on me at once.  
“ I could not go through your work at one  
“ breath at that time, though I have done  
“ it since. I am now enabled to thank  
“ you, not only for the honour you have  
“ done me, but for the great satisfaction,  
“ and the infinite variety and compass of  
“ instruction I have received from your  
“ incomparable work. Every thing has  
“ been done which was so naturally to be  
“ expected from the Author of the History  
“ of

“ of Scotland, and of the age of Charles  
“ the Fifth. I believe few books have  
“ done more than this, towards clearing  
“ up dark points, correcting errors, and  
“ removing prejudices. You have too  
“ the rare secret of rekindling an interest  
“ on subjects that had so often been treated,  
“ and in which every thing which could  
“ feed a vital flame appeared to have been  
“ consumed. I am sure I read many parts  
“ of your History with that fresh concern  
“ and anxiety which attend those who are  
“ not previously apprised of the event.  
“ You have besides, thrown quite a new  
“ light on the present state of the Spanish  
“ provinces, and furnished both materials  
“ and hints for a rational theory of what  
“ may be expected from them in future.

“ The part which I read with the greatest  
“ pleasure is, the discussion on the man-  
“ ners and character of the inhabitants of  
“ that New World. I have always thought  
“ with you, that we possess at this time  
“ very great advantages towards the know-  
“ ledge of human nature. We need no  
“ longer go to History to trace it in all  
“ stages

“stages and periods. History, from its  
“comparative youth, is but a poor in-  
“structor. When the Egyptians called  
“the Greeks Children in Antiquities, we  
“may well call them Children; and so we  
“may call all those nations which were  
“able to trace the progress of society only  
“within their own limits. But now the  
“great Map of Mankind is unrolled at  
“once, and there is no state or gradation  
“of barbarism, and no mode of refine-  
“ment which we have not at the same  
“moment under our view: the very dif-  
“ferent civility of Europe and of China;  
“the barbarism of Persia and of Abyssinia;  
“the erratic manners of Tartary and of  
“Arabia; the savage state of North Ame-  
“rica and of New Zealand. Indeed you  
“have made a noble use of the advan-  
“tages you have had. You have employed  
“philosophy to judge on manners, and  
“from manners you have drawn new  
“resources for philosophy. I only think  
“that in one or two points you have  
“hardly done justice to the savage cha-  
“racter.

“There

“ There remains before you a great field.  
“ *Periculose plenum opus aleæ Tractas, et*  
“ *incedis per ignes. Suppositos cineri doloso.*  
“ When even those ashes will be spread  
“ over the present fire, God knows. I am  
“ heartily sorry that we are now supplying  
“ you with that kind of dignity and con-  
“ cern, which is purchased to History at  
“ the expence of mankind. I had rather  
“ by far that Dr. Robertson’s pen were  
“ only employed in delineating the humble  
“ scenes of political œconomy, than the  
“ great events of a civil war. However,  
“ if our statesmen had read the book of  
“ human nature instead of the Journals of  
“ the House of Commons, and History  
“ instead of Acts of Parliament, we should  
“ not by the latter have furnished out so  
“ ample a page for the former. For my  
“ part, I have not been, nor am I very  
“ forward in my speculations on this sub-  
“ ject. All that I have ventured to make  
“ have hitherto proved fallacious. I con-  
“ fess, I thought the Colonies left to them-  
“ selves could not have made any thing  
“ like the present resistance to the whole  
“ power

“ power of this country and its allies. I  
“ did not think it could have been done  
“ without the declared interference of the  
“ House of Bourbon. But I looked on it  
“ as very probable that France and Spain  
“ would before this time have taken a  
“ decided part. In both these conjectures  
“ I have judged amiss.—You will smile  
“ when I send you a trifling temporary  
“ production, made for the occasion of a  
“ day, and to perish with it, in return for  
“ your immortal work. But our exchange  
“ resembles the politics of the times. You  
“ send out solid wealth, the accumulation  
“ of ages, and in return you get a few  
“ flying leaves of poor American paper.  
“ However, you have the mercantile com-  
“ fort of finding the balance of trade  
“ infinitely in your favour; and I console  
“ myself with the snug consideration of  
“ uninformed natural acuteness, that I  
“ have my warehouse full of goods at  
“ another’s expence.

“ Adieu, Sir, continue to instruct the  
“ world; and whilst we carry on a poor  
“ unequal conflict with the passions and  
“ prejudices

“ prejudices of our day, perhaps with no  
“ better weapons than other passions and  
“ prejudices of our own, convey wisdom  
“ at our expence to future generations.”

After these testimonies to the excellence of the American History, joined to twenty years' possession of the public favour, it may perhaps be thought presumption in me to interpose my own judgment with respect to its peculiar merits. I cannot help, however, remarking (what appears still more characteristical of this than of any of Dr. Robertson's other works) the comprehensive survey which he has taken of his vast and various subject, and the skilful arrangement by which he has bestowed connection and symmetry on a mass of materials so shapeless and disjointed. The penetration and sagacity displayed in his delineation of savage manners, and the unbiased good sense with which he has contrasted that state of society with civilized life, (a speculation in the prosecution of which so many of his predecessors had lost themselves in vague declamation or in paradoxical refinement,) have been much and

and deservedly admired. His industry also and accuracy in collecting information with respect to the Spanish system of colonial policy, have received warm praise from his friends and from the public. But what perhaps does no less honour to the powers of his mind than any of these particulars is, the ability and address with which he has treated some topics that did not fall within the ordinary sphere of his studies; more especially those which border on the province of the natural historian. In the consideration of these, although we may perhaps, in one or two instances, have room to regret that he had not been still more completely prepared for the undertaking by previous habits of scientific disquisition, we uniformly find him interesting and instructive in the information he conveys; and happy, beyond most English Writers, in the descriptive powers of his style. The species of description too in which he excels is peculiarly adapted to his subject; distinguished, not by those picturesque touches which vie with the effects of the Pencil in presenting local scenery

scenery to the mind, but by an expression, to which Language alone is equal, of the grand features of an unsubdued World. In these passages he discovers talents, as a Writer, different from any thing that appears in his other publications ; a compass and richness of diction the more surprising, that the objects described were so little familiarized to his thoughts, and, in more than one instance, rivalling the majestic eloquence which destined Buffon to be the Historian of Nature.

After all, however, the principal charm of this, as well as of his other Histories, arises from the graphical effect of his narrative; wherever his subject affords him materials for an interesting picture. What force and beauty of painting in his circumstantial details of the voyage of Columbus ; of the first aspect of the New Continent ; and of the interviews of the natives with the Spanish adventurers ! With what animation and fire does he follow the steps of Cortes through the varying fortunes of his vast and hazardous career ; yielding, it must be owned, somewhat too much to the in-

fluence of the passions which his hero felt ; but bestowing, at the same time, the warm tribute of admiration and sympathy on the virtues and fate of those whom he subdued ? The arts, the institutions, and the manners of Europe and of America ; but above all, the splendid characters of Cortes and of Guatimozin, enable him, in this part of his work, to add to its other attractions that of the finest contrasts which occur in History.

On these and similar occasions, if I may be allowed to judge from what I experience in myself, he seizes more completely, than any other modern Historian, the attention of his reader, and transports him into the midst of the transactions which he records. His own imagination was warm and vigorous ; and, although in the conduct of life it gave no tincture of enthusiasm to his temper, yet, in the solitude of the closet, it attached him peculiarly to those passages of history which approach to the romantic. Hence many of the characteristical beauties of his writings ; and hence too, perhaps, some of their imperfections.

A cold

A cold and phlegmatic historian, who surveys human affairs like the inhabitant of a different planet, if his narrative should sometimes languish for want of interest, will at least avoid those prepossessions into which the Writer must occasionally be betrayed, who, mingling with a sympathetic ardour among the illustrious personages whose story he contemplates, is liable, while he kindles with their generous emotions, to be infected by the contagion of their prejudices and passions.

These effects, resulting naturally from a warm imagination, were heightened in Dr. Robertson by the vigour of an active and aspiring mind. It was not from the indifference produced by indolence or abstraction that he withdrew from the business of life to philosophy and letters. He was formed for action no less than speculation; and had fortune opened to him a field equal to his talents, he would have preferred, without hesitation, (if I do not greatly mistake his character,) the pursuits of the former to those of the latter. His studies were all directed to the great scenes

of political exertion ; and it was only because he wanted an opportunity to sustain a part in them himself, that he submitted to be an Historian of the actions of others. In all his writings the influence of the circumstances which I have now suggested may, I think, be traced ; but in none of them is it so strongly marked as in the History of America. There he writes with the interest of one who had been himself an actor on the scene ; giving an ideal range to his ambition among the astonishing events which he describes.

Perhaps, indeed, it must be owned, on the other hand, that if the excellencies of this performance are on a scale commensurate to the magnitude of the subject, it is in some respects more open to censure than any of his other productions. A partiality for the charms of eloquence and the originality of system displayed in the writings of Buffon and de Paw ;—a partiality natural to the enthusiasm of a congenial mind, has unquestionably produced a facility in the admission of many of their assertions which are now classed with the prejudices of former

mer times. After allowing, however, to this charge all the weight it possesses, it ought to be remembered, in justice to Dr. Robertson, what important additions have been made, since the time he wrote, to our knowledge both of America and of its aboriginal inhabitants; and that it is not from our present stock of information, but from what was then current in Europe, that an estimate can fairly be formed of the extent and accuracy of his researches. When he hazarded himself, like Columbus, in traversing an unknown ocean, and in surveying a New World, much, it might be expected, would be left to reward the industry of future adventurers.—The disposition he has shewn to palliate or to veil the enormities of the Spaniards in their American conquests, is a blemish of a deeper and more serious nature, to the impression of which I must content myself with opposing those warm and enlightened sentiments of humanity which in general animate his writings. A late candid and well-informed Author, accordingly, after asserting that the conquest of the New

World was effected (on a low estimate) by the murdering of ten millions of the species, and that the accounts of this carnage are authenticated beyond the possibility of dispute, suggests an apology for Dr. Robertson by remarking, "That this is one "of those melancholy passages in the "history of human nature, where a bene- "volent mind, shrinking from the con- "templation of facts, wishes to resist "conviction, and to relieve itself by incre- "dulity \*."

The Spanish nation were not insensible of what they owed to Dr. Robertson for "the temperate spirit" (as Mr. Gibbon expresses it) with which he had related this portion of their story. "On the 8th of "August 1777, he was unanimously elected "a member of the Royal Academy of His- "tory at Madrid; in testimony of their ap- "probation of the industry and care with "which he has applied to the study of "Spanish History, and as a recompence "for his merit in having contributed so

• Bryan Edwards—History of the West Indies.

" much

“ much to illustrate and spread the knowledge of it in foreign countries.” The Academy, at the same time, appointed one of its members to translate the History of America into Spanish ; and it is believed that considerable progress had been made in the translation, when the Spanish Government, judging it inexpedient that a work should be made public, in which the nature of the trade with America, and the system of Colonial administration were so fully explained, interposed its authority to stop the undertaking.

As the volumes which have been now under our review did not complete Dr. Robertson’s original design, he announced in the preface his intention to resume the subject at a future period ; suspending, in the mean time, the execution of that part of his plan which related to the British settlements, “ on account of the *ferment* “ which then agitated our North American “ Colonies.” A fragment of this intended work, which has been published since his death, while it illustrates the persevering

ardor of his mind, must excite a lively regret in all who read it, that a History so peculiarly calculated by its subject to co-extend his fame with the future progress of our language in the regions beyond the Atlantic, had not been added to the other monuments of his genius.

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The caution which Dr. Robertson observed in his expressions concerning the American war, suggests some doubts about his sentiments on that subject. In his letters to Mr. Strahan he writes with greater freedom, and sometimes states, without reserve, his opinions of men and measures.

One or two of these passages (which I transcribe without any comment) appear to me to be objects of curiosity, as they illustrate Dr. Robertson's political views; and I flatter myself they will now be read without offence, when the factions to which they allude are almost effaced from our recollection by the more interesting events of a later period. I need scarcely premise,

mise, that in quoting Dr. Robertson's opinions I would by no means be understood to subscribe to them as my own.

In a letter, dated October 6, 1775, he writes thus: "I agree with you in sentiment about the affairs of America. Incapacity, or want of information, has led the people employed there to deceive Ministry. Trusting to them, they have been trifling for two years, when they should have been serious, until they have rendered a very simple piece of business extremely perplexed. They have permitted colonies disjoined by nature and situation to consolidate into a regular systematical confederacy; and when a few regiments stationed in each capital would have rendered it impossible for them to take arms, they have suffered them quietly to levy and train forces, as if they had not known and seen against whom they were prepared. But now we are fairly committed, and I do think it fortunate that the violence of the Americans has brought matters to a crisis too soon for themselves. From the beginning

" of

“ of the contest I have always asserted that  
“ independence was their object. The  
“ distinction between *taxation* and *regu-*  
“ *lation* is mere folly. There is not an  
“ argument against our right of taxing that  
“ does not conclude with tenfold force  
“ against our power of regulating their  
“ trade. They may profess or disclaim  
“ what they please, and hold the language  
“ that best suits their purpose; but if they  
“ have any meaning, it must be that they  
“ should be free states, connected with us  
“ by blood, by habit, and by religion, but  
“ at liberty to buy and sell and trade where  
“ and with whom they please. This they  
“ will one day attain, but not just now,  
“ if there be any degree of political wis-  
“ dom or vigour remaining. At the same  
“ time one cannot but regret that pro-  
“ sperous and growing states should be  
“ checked in their career. As a lover of  
“ mankind I bewail it; but as a subject of  
“ Great Britain, I must wish that their  
“ dependence on it should continue. If  
“ the wisdom of Government can termi-  
“ nate the contest with honour instantly,  
“ that

“ that would be the most desirable issue.  
“ This, however, I take to be *now* im-  
“ possible; and I will venture to foretel,  
“ that if our leaders do not at once exert  
“ the power of the British Empire in its  
“ full force, the struggle will be long, du-  
“ bious, and disgraceful. We are past the  
“ hour of lenitives and half exertions. If  
“ the contest be protracted, the smallest  
“ interruption of the tranquillity that now  
“ reigns in Europe, or even the appearance  
“ of it, may be fatal.

“ It is lucky that my American History  
“ was not finished before this event. How  
“ many plausible theories that I should  
“ have been entitled to form, are contra-  
“ dicted by what has now happened !”

To this extract, I shall only add a few sentences from a letter written to the same correspondent about the affairs of America, nine years before, at the time of the repeal of the Stamp-A&t.

“ I am glad to hear the determination  
“ of the House of Commons concerning  
“ the Stamp-A&t. I rejoice, from my  
“ love

“ love of the human species, that a million  
“ of men in America have some chance of  
“ running the same great career which  
“ other free people have held before them.  
“ I do not apprehend revolution or inde-  
“ pendence sooner than these must and  
“ should come. A very little skill and  
“ attention in the art of governing may  
“ preserve the supremacy of Britain as long  
“ as it ought to be preserved. You can do  
“ me no favour more obliging, than that of  
“ writing me often an account of all oc-  
“ currances in the debates on this affair.  
“ I am much interested in the subject ;  
“ very little in the men who act on either  
“ side. I am not weak enough greatly to  
“ admire their virtues, nor so factious as  
“ to adopt their passions.”

## SECTION IV.

*Continuation of the same Subject—HISTORICAL DISQUISITION CONCERNING INDIA.—General Remarks on Dr. Robertson's Merits as an Historian.*

IN consequence of the interruption of Dr. Robertson's plans produced by the American Revolution, he was led to think of some other subject which might, in the mean time, give employment to his studious leisure. A letter, dated July 1778, to his friend the Rev. Mr. Waddilove, (now Dean of Rippon,) contains some important information with respect to his designs at this period.

“ The state of our affairs in North America is not such as to invite me to go on with my History of the New World. “ I must wait for times of greater tranquillity,

“quillity, when I can write and the public  
“can read with more impartiality and bet-  
“ter information than at present. Every  
“person with whom I conversed in Lon-  
“don confirmed me in my resolution of  
“making a pause for a little, until it shall  
“be known in what manner the ferment  
“will subside. But as it is neither my  
“inclination nor interest to be altogether  
“idle, many of my friends have suggested  
“to me a new subject, the History of  
“Great Britain from the Revolution to  
“the Acceßion of the House of Hanover.  
“It will be some satisfaction to me to  
“enter on a domestic subjeßt, after being  
“engaged so long on foreign ones, where  
“one half of my time and labour were  
“employed in teaching myself to under-  
“stand manners, and laws, and forms  
“which I was to explain to others. You  
“know better than any body how much  
“pains I bestowed in studying the consti-  
“tution, the manners, and the commerce  
“of Spanish America. The Review con-  
“tained in the first volume of Charles V.  
“was founded on researches still more  
“laborious.

“ laborious. I shall not be involved in  
“ the same painful enquiries, if I under-  
“ take the present work. I possess already  
“ as much knowledge of the British govern-  
“ ment and laws as usually is possessed by  
“ other persons who have been well edu-  
“ cated and have lived in good company.  
“ A minute investigation of facts will be  
“ the chief object of my attention. With  
“ respect to these, I shall be much aided by  
“ the original papers published by Sir John  
“ Dalrymple and Macpherson, and lately  
“ by Lord Hardwicke. The Memoirs of  
“ Noailles, concerning the French nego-  
“ tiations in Spain, contain very curious  
“ information. I have got a very valuable  
“ collection of papers from the Duke of  
“ Montague, which belonged to the Duke  
“ of Shrewsbury, and I am promised the  
“ large collection of the Duke of Marl-  
“ borough, which were formerly in the  
“ hands of Mr. Mallet. From these and  
“ other materials I hope to write a His-  
“ tory which may be both entertaining  
“ and instructive. I know that I shall  
“ get upon dangerous ground, and must  
“ relate

“ relate events concerning which our political factions entertain very different sentiments. But I am little alarmed with this. I flatter myself that I have temper enough to judge with impartiality; and if, after examining with candour, I do give offence, there is no man whose situation is more independent.”

Whatever the motives were which induced him to relinquish this project, it is certain that it did not long occupy his thoughts. From a letter of Mr. Gibbon, it would appear to have been abandoned before the end of the year 1779. The passage is interesting, not only as it serves to ascertain the fact, but as it suggests a valuable hint with respect to a different historical subject.

“ I remember a kind of engagement you had contracted to repeat your visit to London every second year, and I look forwards with pleasure to next spring when your bond will naturally become due. I should almost hope that you would bring with you some fruits of your leisure, had I not been informed

“ that you had totally relinquished your  
“ design of continuing Mr. Hume’s His-  
“ tory of England. Notwithstanding the  
“ just and deep sense which I must entertain  
“ (if the intelligence be true) of our public  
“ loss, I have scarcely courage enough to  
“ blame you. The want of materials and  
“ the danger of offence are two formidable  
“ obstacles for an Historian who wishes to  
“ instruct, and who is determined not to  
“ betray his readers.—But if you leave the  
“ narrow limits of our island, there still  
“ remain, without returning to the troubled  
“ scene of America, many subjects not  
“ unworthy of your genius. Will you  
“ give me leave, as a vague and indigested  
“ hint, to suggest the History of the Pro-  
“ testants in France; the events are im-  
“ portant in themselves, and intimately  
“ connected with the great Revolutions of  
“ Europe: some of the boldest or most  
“ amiable characters of modern times, the  
“ Admiral Coligny, Henry IV. &c. would  
“ be your peculiar heroes; the materials  
“ are copious, and authentic, and accessible;  
“ and the objects appear to stand at that

“ just distance which excites curiosity without inspiring passion. Excuse the freedom, and weigh the merits (if any) of this proposal \*.”

As I have had very little access to see any of Dr. Robertson's answers to the letters of his correspondents, I am ignorant what reply he made to this suggestion of Mr. Gibbon, as well as of the circumstances that induced him to lay aside his plans with respect to the History of England. It is impossible, however, not to feel much regret that he did not carry them into execution. In spite of the obstacles which Mr. Gibbon mentions, there can be little doubt that the work would have been an important accession to English literature; and, in all probability, from the interesting nature of the subject, the most popular of his performances. The intrigues of the different factions during the reign of Queen Anne would have afforded an ample field for the exercise of his cool and discriminating judgment; the campaigns of Marl-

\* Appendix, Note F.

borough deserved such an Historian; while the literature and philosophy of that memorable period would have given full employment to those critical powers which he so eminently possessed, and of which he has unfortunately left no monument behind him. The slight sketches of this kind, interspersed with the narrative of Mr. Hume's History, have always been favourite passages with readers of taste; and, if I may be permitted to judge from Dr. Robertson's conversation, he would not, in this species of composition, have been surpassed by any of his contemporaries.

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I have not heard of any other work that he projected after this period. He seems indeed soon to have abandoned all thoughts of writing any more for the public, and to have indulged the idea of prosecuting his studies in future for his private amusement. His circumstances were independent: he was approaching to the age of sixty, with a constitution considerably impaired by a sedentary life; and a long application to

the compositions he had prepared for the press, had interfered with much of the gratification he might have enjoyed, if he had been at liberty to follow the impulse of his own taste and curiosity. Such a sacrifice must be more or less made by all who devote themselves to letters, whether with a view to emolument or to fame; nor would it perhaps be easy to make it, were it not for the prospect (seldom, alas! realized,) of earning by their exertions, that learned and honourable leisure which he was so fortunate as to attain. He retired from the business of the ecclesiastical courts about the same time; and, for seven or eight years, divided the hours which he could spare from his professional duties, between the luxury of reading and the conversation of his friends.

The activity of his mind, in the mean time, continued unimpaired; and the habits of study he had so long been accustomed to, gave a certain scope and connection even to his historical recreations. To one of these, which, from its accidental connection with

with some of his former works, engaged his attention more closely than his ordinary pursuits, the public is indebted for a valuable performance, of which the materials seem almost insensibly to have swelled to a volume, long after his most intimate friends imagined that he had renounced all thoughts of the press. The Disquisition concerning Ancient India, which closed his historical labours, took its rise (as he himself informs us) “from the perusal of Major Rennell’s “Memoir for illustrating his Map of In-“dostan. This suggested to him the idea “of examining, more fully than he had “done in the introductory book to his “History of America, into the knowledge “which the Ancients had of that country, “and of considering what is certain, what “is obscure, and what is fabulous, in the “accounts of it which they have handed “down to us.”—“In undertaking this “enquiry,” (he adds,) “he had originally “no other object than his own amusement “and instruction; but in carrying it on, “and consulting with care the authors of “antiquity, some facts hitherto unobserved,

“ and many which had not been examined  
“ with proper attention, occurred; new  
“ views opened; his ideas gradually ex-  
“ tended, and became more interesting;  
“ till at length he imagined that the result  
“ of his researches might prove amusing  
“ and instructive to others.”

Such is the account given by himself of the origin and progress of a disquisition begun in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and in twelve months brought to a conclusion; exhibiting, nevertheless, in every part, a diligence in research, a soundness of judgment, and a perspicuity of method, not inferior to those which distinguish his other performances. From the nature of the subject it was impossible to render it equally amusing to ordinary readers, or to bestow on his language the same splendor and variety; but the style possesses all the characteristical beauties of his former compositions, as far as they could with propriety be introduced into a discourse, of which the general design excluded every superfluous and ambitious ornament. The observations in the *Appendix*, upon the character,

character, the manners, and the institutions of the people of India, present a valuable outline of all the most important information concerning them, which was then accessible to the philosophers of Europe; and, if they have already lost part of their interest, in consequence of the astonishing discoveries which have been since brought to light in Asia, by a fortunate and unexampled combination of genius, learning, and official rank, in a few individuals whose names do honour to this country; they, at least, evince that ardent and enlightened curiosity which animated the Author's enquiries in his most advanced years; and afford a proof, that his mind kept pace, to the last, with the progress of historical knowledge.

In these observations too, we may occasionally trace the influence of still higher motives; to which he has himself alluded, with an affecting solemnity, in the last sentences which he addressed to the public. "If I had aimed" (says he) "at nothing else than to describe the civil polity, the arts, the sciences, and religious institu-

“tions, of one of the most ancient and most  
“numerous races of men, that alone would  
“have led me into enquiries and discussions  
“both curious and instructive. I own,  
“however, that I have all along kept in  
“view an object more interesting, as well  
“as of greater importance; and entertain  
“hopes, that if the account which I have  
“given of the early and high civilisation  
“of India, and of the wonderful progress  
“of its inhabitants in elegant arts and  
“useful science, shall be received as just  
“and well established, it may have some  
“influence upon the behaviour of Eu-  
“ropeans towards that people. It was by  
“an impartial and candid enquiry into  
“their manners, that the Emperor Akber  
“was led to consider the Hindoos as no  
“less entitled to protection and favour than  
“his other subjects; and to govern them  
“with such equity and mildness, as to  
“merit from a grateful people the honour-  
“able appellation of ‘the Guardian of  
“Mankind.’ If I might presume to hope,  
“that the description I have given of the  
“manners and institutions of the people  
“of

“ of India could contribute in the smallest degree, and with the most remote influence, to render their character more respectable, and their condition more happy, I should close my literary labours with the satisfaction of thinking that I have not lived or written in vain \*.”

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In concluding this general review of Dr. Robertson's publications, our attention is naturally led, in the first place, to the extent and variety of his historical researches. In this respect, he has certainly not been surpassed by any writer of the present times; nor would it perhaps be easy to name another who has united to so luminous an arrangement of his materials, and such masterly skill in adorning them, an equal degree of industry and exactness in tracing them to their original sources. After a minute examination of the most disputed passages of his first performance,

\* Appendix, Note G.

a late author \* has ventured to pronounce him, “ the most faithful of Historians;” and I have no doubt that this honourable appellation will be sanctioned by those who shall examine his other works with the same acuteness, accuracy, and candour.

In the art of narration too, which, next to correctness in the statement of facts, is the most essential qualification of an Historian, Dr. Robertson’s skill is pre-eminent: perhaps I might venture to say, that in this art, his chief and characteristical excellence as an Historian consists. I do not, at present, allude merely to the richness of colouring with which he occasionally arrests the attention; but to the distinctness, perspicuity, and fulness, with which he uniformly communicates historical information; carefully avoiding every reference to whatever previous knowledge of the subject his reader may accidentally possess. In this distinctness and perspicuity, so conspicuous in the great models

\* Mr. Laing.

of

of antiquity, some modern writers of unquestionable talents have failed to a degree which renders all their other merits of little value;—a failure more particularly observable, since it became fashionable, after the example of Voltaire, to connect with the view of political transactions, an examination of their effects on the manners and condition of mankind, and to blend the lights of philosophy with the appropriate beauties of historical composition. In consequence of this innovation, while the province of the Historian has been enlarged and dignified, the difficulty of his task has increased in the same proportion; reduced, as he must frequently be, to the alternative, either of interrupting unseasonably the chain of events, or, by interweaving disquisition and narrative together, of sacrificing clearness to brevity. By few writers of the present age has this combination of philosophy with history been more frequently attempted than by Dr. Robertson; and by none have the inconveniences which it threatens been more

more successfully avoided. In the former respect his merit is great; but in the latter, he may be safely proposed as a pattern for imitation.

Nor does the beauty of his narrative consist only in the luminous distinctness, and picturesque selection of his details. In a passage formerly quoted from one of Mr. Walpole's letters, it is mentioned, among the other recommendations of the History of Scotland, that, "although composed of pieces of information, each of which would make a separate memoir, yet the whole is hurried on into one uninterrupted story." The remark is just, and it points at an excellence of the highest order, conspicuous in all Dr. Robertson's publications; the continuity which unites together the different parts of his subject, in consequence of the address and felicity displayed in his transitions. It is this last circumstance which bestows on his works that unceasing interest which constitutes one of the principal charms in tales of fiction; an interest easy to support in relating a series of imaginary

ginary adventures, but which, in historical composition, evinces, more than any thing else, the hand of a master.

The attainment of these different perfections was undoubtedly much facilitated by the plan which he adopted, of throwing into the form of Notes and Illustrations, whatever critical or scientific discussions appeared to him to interfere with the peculiar province of history. In one of the last conversations I had with him, he mentioned this as an improvement of considerable importance in historical writing; and his final judgment on the subject will be allowed to have great weight in favour of that mode of arrangement which he adopted. On this point, I know, there is a wide diversity of opinion: nor do I think myself entitled to pronounce with confidence upon either side, where the best judges have hesitated in their decision. Our late excellent colleague Mr. Smith carried to such a length his partiality to the ancient forms of classical composition, that he considered every species of note as a blemish or imperfection;

fection; indicating, either an idle accumulation of superfluous particulars, or a want of skill and comprehension in the general design. Dr. Douglas too, the present Bishop of Salisbury, in a letter addressed to Dr. Robertson on occasion of his American History, appears dissatisfied with the local separation of the notes from the text; without, however, disputing the general principle on which the arrangement of his materials proceeds. "I think," (says he,) "that your notes and illustrations very frequently contain matter of the greatest importance to the strengthening the arguments and conclusions you adopt in the body of the book; and they are so widely separated by the mode of your publication, that the reader cannot see, at one view, the great merit of your work. Mr. Gibbon adopted this method, in imitation of your Charles V.; but I believe he has found the wishes of the public in favour of another arrangement; for I understand, in a new edition of his History which we are soon to have, the

“ notes and illustrations are to be put at  
“ the bottom of the pages to which they  
“ refer.—I know you will excuse this  
“ liberty ; and very probably, as you have  
“ considered the matter more accurately  
“ than such readers as I am, you can give  
“ very substantial reasons for preferring the  
“ plan of throwing the notes and illustra-  
“ tions to the end of the volume.”

On a question of this sort, the suggestions of so learned and judicious a critic are undoubtedly entitled to peculiar deference : but I must be permitted to express my doubts whether he has added to their weight, by appealing to the arrangement of Mr. Gibbon ; which, in this instance, has always appeared to me to be inconvenient in the extreme. In no species of writing is it agreeable to have the attention so frequently withdrawn from the text ; but in historical writing it is impossible to devise a more effectual expedient for counteracting the effects of the author's art. The curious research and the epigrammatic wit so often displayed in Mr. Gibbon's notes, and which sometimes

sometimes render them more amusing than even the eloquent narrative which they are meant to illustrate, serve only to add to the embarrassment occasioned by this unfortunate distribution of his materials. He seems, indeed, from a letter published in his posthumous works, to have been fully satisfied, after a trial of both plans, that the preference was due to that which, after Dr. Robertson's example, he had originally pursued. "I cannot be displeased" (he observes) "with the two numerous and correct impressions which have been published for the use of the Continent at Basil in Switzerland. Of their fourteen octavo volumes, the two last include the whole body of the notes. The public importunity had forced me to remove them from the end of the volume to the bottom of the page; but I have often repented of my compliance \*."

It is remarkable that no alternative should have occurred to Mr. Gibbon

\* Vol. i. p. 173.

between

between placing all his notes at the bottom of the page, or collecting them all in the form of an Appendix. In the first edition of his first volume, he followed Dr. Robertson implicitly in adopting the latter method; which, although by far the more unexceptionable of the two, might be obviously improved by some limitations. Mr. Hume, in a letter to Mr. Strahan, objects to it strongly. "One is plagued with "Gibbon's notes, according to the present "method of printing the book. When a "note is announced, you turn to the end "of the volume, and there you often find "nothing but a reference to an authority. "All these authorities ought only to be "printed at the margin or the bottom of "the page \*."

What Mr. Hume here remarks concerning references to authorities, may be extended to those short explanatory sentences, which, being intended to facilitate the reader's progress, should unquestionably be brought under his eye, at the

\* Gibbon's Post. Works, vol. i. p. 500.

same time with the passage they are intended to elucidate. Dr. Robertson, as well as Mr. Gibbon, seems to have overlooked this distinction between explanatory hints, and *notes* intended for the gratification of the curious; and hence have arisen (at least in part) those inconveniences in the technical arrangement of his volumes, of which Dr. Douglas was led to complain.

A still more important blemish, however, it must be confessed, than what this respectable correspondent has specified, is sometimes the real source of the imperfection he has remarked; I mean, that a considerable portion of the matter which is parcelled out among the notes, ought to have been incorporated with the text. Where a writer finds it necessary to enter into speculation and discussion, the whole of his argument should undoubtedly be stated at once, and not broken down into fragments, which the reader is to collect from different parts of the book. In those dissertations, therefore, which form so considerable a part both of the History of Charles V. and of America, it would perhaps have been better, if

if the Author had adhered less closely to the plan which he has so judiciously adopted in his historical narrative. The arguments which recommend it in the latter species of composition, it is sufficiently evident, do not apply to it when introduced into the former.

After all, whoever attempts to instruct the world by any literary undertaking, whether historical or speculative, will find it necessary, for the complete satisfaction of accurate inquirers, to engage in occasional discussions which could not be introduced into the body of the work, without digressions inconsistent with a simple and distinct arrangement; nor compressed into notes at the bottom of the page, without stopping the reader's progress and misleading his attention. No writer has been more completely aware of this than Mr. Hume, who, in all his publications, both historical and philosophical, has distinguished carefully those incidental suggestions which are necessary to prevent any hesitation about the text from the critical disquisitions useful for satisfying men of curious research, or for

obviating the doubts of more refined speculation. Dr. Robertson's subjects, in all his Histories excepting that of Scotland, engaged him in inquiries more open to controversy, and in arguments resting upon information less accessible to ordinary readers, than those of Mr. Hume. His proofs and illustrations, accordingly, bear a far greater proportion to the size of his volumes ; but I am inclined to think that, if examined with proper attention, the arrangement of them will be found (with a few exceptions) to reflect no less honour on his taste and discernment.

The stress which Dr. Robertson himself laid on this peculiarity in his mode of composition, added to the indecision of Mr. Gibbon with respect to its propriety, will, I hope, apologize sufficiently for the minuteness with which some of the foregoing particulars are stated.—The general question concerning the expediency of imitating the ancients, in limiting an author's intercourse with his readers, to what is conveyed in the text, does not seem to me to admit of discussion. Considered as sources of authen-

tic and of accurate information, the value of the classics is infinitely diminished by this very circumstance ; and few, I believe, have studied Mr. Smith's works, (particularly his Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,) without regretting, on some occasions, the omission of his authorities ; and, on others, the digressions into which he has been led, by conforming so scrupulously to the example of antiquity.

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Of Dr. Robertson's merits as an Historian, as far as they are connected with the genius of the language in which he wrote, it does not become a native of this part of the island to express a decided opinion. And, accordingly, in the few remarks which I am to hazard on that subject, although I shall state my own judgment with freedom, I would be understood to write with all possible diffidence.

The general strain of his composition is flowing, equal, and majestic ; harmonious beyond that of most English writers, yet

seldom deviating, in quest of harmony, into inversion, redundancy, or affectation. If, in some passages, it may be thought that the effect might have been heightened by somewhat more of variety in the structure and cadence of his periods, it must be recollected that this criticism involves an encomium on the beauty of his style; for it is only where the ear is habitually gratified, that the rhythm of composition becomes an object of the reader's attention.

In comparing his turn of expression with that of the Classical Writers of England, a difference may, I think, be perceived; originating in the provincial situation of the country where he received his education and spent his life: and, if I am not much mistaken, the same observation may be extended, in a greater or less degree, to most of our contemporaries who have laboured under similar disadvantages. I do not allude, at present, to what are commonly called *Scotticisms*; for, from these Dr. Robertson's works have been allowed, by the most competent judges, to be remarkably free; but to an occasional substitution of

general

general or of circuitous modes of expression instead of the simple and specific English phrase. An author who lives at a distance from the acknowledged standard of elegance, writes in a dialect different from that in which he is accustomed to speak; and is naturally led to evade, as much as possible, the hazardous use of idiomatical phrases, by the employment of such as accord with the general analogy of the language. Hence, in all the lighter and more familiar kinds of writing, the risk of sacrificing ease and vivacity, and what Dr. Johnson calls *genuine Anglicism* \*, in order to secure correctness and purity; and hence the difficulties with which those of our countrymen have had to struggle, who have aimed at the freedom of the epistolary style, or who have attempted to catch the shadowy and fleeting forms of Comic Dialogue. The peculiarity in the manner of *Livy*, censured by *Asinius Pollio*, was probably of a similar description; arising less from an admixture

\* “ If Addison’s language had been less idiomatical, “ it would have lost something of its genuine Anglicism.” — *Lives of the Poets.*

of *Paduan* idioms than from the absence of such as marked the dialect of *Rome*. “ In “ *Tito Livio*,” (says *Quintilian*) “ *miræ* “ *facundiæ* *viro*, *putat* *inesse* *Pollio Asinius* “ *quandam* *Patavinitatem*. *Quare*, *si* *fieri* “ *potest*, *et* *verba* *omnia*, *et* *vox*, *hujus* “ *alumnum* *Urbis* *oleant*; *ut* *oratio* *Romana* “ *planè* *videatur*, *non* *civitate* *donata*\*.”

If, however, in these and a few other respects, important advantages are possessed by those whose standard of propriety is always before them in their ordinary habits of conversation and of business, it must perhaps be granted, on the other hand, that an ear thus familiarized from infancy to phrases which it has been accustomed to retain, without any selection, or any reference to general principles, can scarcely fail to have some effect in blunting an author's discrimination between the established modes of classical expression and the accidental jargon of the day. Illustrations of this remark might be easily collected from writers of the highest and most deserved reputation;

\* *Quintil.* l. viii. c. 1.

more particularly from some who have cultivated, with the greatest success, the appropriate graces of the English tongue.—Even the works of Dr. Middleton, which have been often recommended to Scotchmen as the safest models for their imitation, abound with instances of colloquial language, sanctioned probably by the authority of the fashionable speakers of his time, but which, I should suppose, would now be considered as vulgarisms, by such of his countrymen as have formed their taste on the compositions either of an earlier or of a later period.

In guarding against these temporary modes of speech, the provincial residence of a Scotchman may sometimes have its use, by teaching him to distrust his ear as an arbiter of elegance, and to appeal on every questionable point to the practice of those whose established reputation gives the stamp of propriety to the phraseology they have employed. If his composition be deficient in ease, it may be expected not to fall under the ordinary standard, in point of purity: nay, it is not impossible, that in his solicitude

to

to avoid idiomatical phrases, he may be occasionally led to animate and to ennoble his diction; or, by uncommon and fortunate combinations of words, to give to familiar ideas the charm of novelty.

The species of composition to which Dr. Robertson directed his studies, was peculiarly adapted to his local situation, by affording him an opportunity of displaying all the talents he possessed, without imposing on him a trial of his powers in those kinds of writing where a Scotchman is most likely to fail. In delineating the characters of Princes, Statesmen, and Warriors, or in recording events that have happened on the great theatre of public affairs, a certain elevation of language is naturally inspired by the magnitude of the subject. The engaging and pathetic details of domestic life vanish before the eye which contemplates the fortunes of nations, and the revolutions of Empire; and there is even a gravity of manner, exclusive of every thing familiar or flippant, which accords with our idea of him who sits in judgment on the generations that are past.

It

It may, perhaps, be questioned by some, whether Dr. Robertson has not carried to an extreme, his idea of what he has himself called the *dignity of history*; but, whatever opinion we form on this point, it cannot be disputed, that his plan of separating the materials of historical composition from those which fall under the provinces of the Antiquary, and of the writer of Memoirs, was on the whole happily conceived; and that one great charm of his works arises from the taste and judgment with which he has carried it into execution.—Nor has he suffered this scrupulous regard to the unity of historical style to exclude that variety which was necessary for keeping alive the reader's attention. Whenever his subject admits of being enriched or adorned by political or philosophical disquisition, by picturesque description, or by the interesting details of a romantic episode, he scruples not to try his strength with those who have excelled the most in these different departments of literature; uniformly, however, avoiding to mingle in the humble scenes of ordinary life, or to meet his rivals on

on any ground where he did not feel himself completely their equal.

To this systematical selection of the more regular and analogical forms of construction, is to be ascribed, in a considerable degree, his popularity among foreigners, who unite in esteeming him, not only as one of the most eloquent, but as one of the most intelligible of our writers. And, it may be presumed, the same circumstance will secure in his favour the suffrages of posterity, when the passing idioms generated by the capricious modes of our own times, shall be antiquated or forgotten \*.

I have only to add, that some of the foregoing observations apply more strongly to Dr. Robertson's earlier than to his later publications. In the History of Charles V. and still more in that of America, he ventures on expressions which he would not have hazarded before the establishment of his literary name; and accordingly, it may be doubted, whether, in consequence of this circumstance, he did not lose in purity

\* Appendix, Note II.

of diction what he gained in ease and freedom. Perhaps, on the whole, it will be found that of all his performances Charles V. is that which unites the various requisites of good writing in the greatest degree. The style is more natural and flowing than that of the History of Scotland ; while, at the same time, idiomatical phrases are introduced with so sparing and timid a hand, that it is easy to perceive the Author's attention to correctness was not sensibly diminished. In the History of America, although it contains many passages equal, if not superior, to any thing else in his writings, the composition does not seem to me to be so uniformly polished as that of his former works ; nor does it always possess, in the same degree, the recommendations of conciseness and simplicity.

## SECTION V.

*Review of the more active Occupations of Dr. Robertson's Life—Conclusion of the Narrative—Sketch of his Character.*

IN reviewing the History of Dr. Robertson's Life, our attention has hitherto been confined to those pursuits which formed the habitual occupation of his mind; and which have left behind them unperishable monuments. His life, however, was not devoted wholly to the cultivation of letters. His talents fitted him in an eminent degree for the business of the world; and the station in which Providence placed him opened to him a field, which, however unequal to his ambition or to his genius, afforded him the means of evincing what he might have accomplished, if his sphere of exertion had been more extensive and brilliant.

Among

Among the active scenes in which he had an opportunity to engage, the most conspicuous was presented to him by the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court in Scotland. Of the constitution of this court, accordingly, which differs in some remarkable particulars from the clerical convocations in other Christian countries, a general outline is necessary, in order to convey a just idea of the abilities, which secured to him, for a long course of years, an unrivalled influence in guiding its deliberations.

“ The

\* For the materials both of this outline and of the subsequent view of Dr. Robertson's system of ecclesiastical policy, I am indebted to a paper drawn up (at the request of Dr. Robertson's son,) by the Rev. George Hill, D. D. Principal of St. Mary's College in the University of St. Andrews; a gentleman intimately connected with Dr. Robertson by friendship, and highly respected by him for the talents and eloquence which he has for many years displayed in the ecclesiastical courts. In general I have transcribed Dr. Hill's words, taking the liberty occasionally to make such slight alterations on the language as were necessary for preserving some degree of uniformity in the style of my narrative; and a few retrenchments, which the plan of this Memoir rendered unavoidable. That the public, however, may not lose any part of so valuable a communication, I have inserted

“The General Assembly of the church of Scotland is composed of representatives from the presbyteries; from the royal boroughs; from the four universities; and from the Scotch church of Campvere in Holland. The presbyteries send two hundred and ninety members, of whom two hundred and one are ministers, and eighty-nine lay-elders; the royal boroughs send sixty-seven members, all of whom are laymen; the universities send five members, who may be either laymen, or ministers holding an office in the university; and the church of Campvere sends two members, one minister and one lay-elder. The

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inserted in the Appendix, the paragraphs which are here omitted.

As Dr. Hill’s paper was submitted to the examination, and received the unqualified approbation of three of Dr. Robertson’s most confidential friends (1) it may be regarded as an authentic statement of his general principles of church government. For the sake of connection, I have adopted into this Section such parts of it as seemed to me to be necessary for completing the history of his life; abstaining, however, scrupulously from hazarding any ideas of my own, on the subject to which it relates.

(1) Drs. Blair, Carlyle, and Grieve.

whole number is three hundred and sixty-four, of whom two hundred and two are ministers, and one hundred and sixty-two laymen; including in the latter class the members from the universities. The annual sittings of the Assembly continue only for ten days; but a committee of the whole House (called the Commission) has four stated meetings in the year, for the dispatch of whatever business the General Assembly has been unable to overtake \*.

In subordination to this supreme court, there is a series of inferior judicatories rising, one above another, in authority.—The lowest of these is the *Kirk-Sessions*, or Parochial Consistories; composed of the ministers, together with the lay-elders of their respective parishes. The ministers of a number of contiguous parishes, together with certain representatives from the Kirk-Sessions, form a *Presbytery*; and a plurality of presbyteries (differing in number according to accidental circumstances) form a provincial *Synod*.

\* Appendix, Note I.

While the constitution of the Scottish church admits of no superiority of one minister above another, it requires from all its individual members, and from all its inferior judicatories, strict obedience to those who are placed in authority over them. Every court is bound to lay the record of all its proceedings from time to time before the tribunal which is its immediate superior; any part of its proceedings may be brought, by appeal or complaint, under the review of a higher jurisdiction; and every minister, when he receives orders, comes under a solemn engagement, “to assert, maintain, and “defend the doctrines, discipline, and “government of the church; and never “to attempt any thing, directly or indi-“rectly, which may tend to its subversion “or prejudice.”

In consequence of this subordination of judicatories, the General Assembly determines, as the court of last resort, all the causes brought under its review, and has the power of enforcing without controul, obedience to its decrees. It possesses also extensive

extensive legislative powers, as it may, with the concurrence of a majority of presbyteries, enact laws for the government of the whole church.

By the Act of 1592, which gave a legal establishment to the form of church government now delineated, the patron of a vacant parish was entitled to present to the presbytery a person properly qualified ; and the presbytery were required, after subjecting the presentee to certain trials and examinations, of which they were constituted the judges, “ to ordain and settle him as minister of the parish, provided no relevant objection should be stated to his life, doctrine, and qualifications.” This right of presentation, however, although conferred by the fundamental charter of Presbyterian government in Scotland, was early complained of as a grievance ; and accordingly, it was abolished by an act passed under the Usurpation. At the Restoration it was again recovered, but it was retained only for a few years ; the Revolution having introduced a new system, which vested the right of election in the heritors,

elders, and heads of families in the parish. The 10th of Queen Anne at last restored the rights of patrons; but the exercise of these rights was found to be so extremely unpopular, that ministers were generally settled, till after the year 1730, in the manner prescribed by the Act of King William.

During this long period, an aversion to the law of patronage took deep root in the minds of the people; and the circumstances of the times were such as to render it inexpedient for the church courts to contend with a prejudice so inveterate and universal.

When the Presbyterian establishment fell a sacrifice to the policy introduced at the Restoration, the ministers who refused to conform to prelacy were ejected from their churches, and underwent a severe persecution. The firmness which they displayed on this occasion exhibits a strength of character which has never been surpassed; but their situation, while deprived of the countenance of law, and left entirely to the guidance of private conscience, was necessarily

sarily such, as to inspire *independant* principles inconsistent with regular subordination and discipline; and, accordingly, at the Revolution, when the Presbyterian government was re-established, and many of the ejected ministers restored to their pulpits, they brought along with them into the church a spirit scarcely compatible with the connection in which it stood with the paramount authority of the state. Their successors, trained in the same sentiments, saw the right of patronage revived in times which they regarded with a jealous eye; and, without allowing themselves to weigh the expediency of that mode of settlement, they considered it as an appendage of episcopacy which it was the duty of every good Presbyterian to oppose.—While the people, therefore, resisted with violence the first attempt which was made about the year 1730 to exercise this right, the church courts, although they could not entirely disregard the law, contrived, in many instances, to render it ineffectual; and sanctioned by their authority the prevailing prejudices against it. They admitted it as

an uncontrovertible principle in Presbyterian church government, that a presentee, although perfectly well qualified, and unexceptionable in life and doctrine, was nevertheless inadmissible to his clerical office, till the concurrence of the people who were to be under his ministry had been regularly ascertained. The form of expressing this concurrence was by the subscription of a paper termed a *Call*; which was considered as a step so indispensable towards constituting the pastoral relation, that the church-courts, when dissatisfied with it as an expression of the general wishes of the parish, sometimes set aside the presentee altogether; and when they did authorise a settlement, proceeded in a manner which sufficiently implied a greater respect for the call than for the presentation.

The circumstances understood to be necessary for constituting an adequate *call*, were unsusceptible of a precise definition. The unanimous consent of land-holders, elders, and heads of families, was seldom to be looked for; nor was even an absolute majority considered as indispensable, if

if the concurrence afforded a reasonable prospect of an harmonious and useful settlement. This principle of decision was so vague in itself, and so arbitrary in its application, that much was left in the church-courts to the private judgment of individuals, and much to their prejudices and passions ; while the people, finding that a noisy and strenuous opposition seldom failed of success, were encouraged to prosecute their object by tumult and violence. Many of the clergy, considering it as a matter of conscience not to take any share in the settlement of an obnoxious presentee, refused on such occasions to carry into execution the orders of their superiors ; and such was the temper of the times, that the leading men of the Assembly, although they wished to support the law of the land, found themselves obliged to have recourse to expedients ; imposing slight censures on the disobedient, and appointing special committees (whom it was found sometimes necessary to protect by a military force), to discharge the duties which the others had declined.

Measures of this kind, pursued with little variation for about twenty years, had so relaxed the discipline of the church, that individuals openly claimed it as a right to disobey its sentences, whenever their disobedience was justified, according to the best of their judgment, by a principle of conscience.

Such was the state of the ecclesiastical establishment in Scotland when Dr. Robertson and his friends began to take an active share in its business. Dissatisfied with the system adopted by his predecessors, and convinced that the more free any constitution is, the greater is the danger of violating its fundamental laws, his vigorous and enlightened mind suggested to him the necessity of opposing more decisive measures to these growing disorders, and of maintaining the authority of the church by enforcing the submission of all its members. The two capital articles by which he conceived presbytery to be distinguished from every other ecclesiastical establishment, were the parity of its ministers, and the subordination of its judicatories.—“Wherever

“ there

“ there is a subordination of courts,” (as he has himself observed in an authentic document of his ecclesiastical principles,) “ there is one court that must be supreme ; “ for subordination were in vain, if it did “ not terminate in some last resort. Such “ a supreme judicature is the General “ Assembly of the church of Scotland ; “ and therefore, if its decisions could be “ disputed and disobeyed by inferior courts “ with impunity, the Presbyterian consti- “ tution would be entirely overturned. On “ this supposition, there is no occasion for “ the church of Scotland to meet in its “ General Assemblies any more ; its “ government is at an end ; and it is “ exposed to the contempt and scorn of “ the world, as a church without union, “ order, or discipline ; destitute of strength “ to support its own constitutions, and “ falling into ruins by the abuse of “ liberty.”

A question which came under the consideration of the Assembly in the year 1751, when he spoke for the first time in that supreme court, afforded him an opportunity

nity of unfolding his general principles of ecclesiastical government. The conduct of a clergyman, who had disobeyed a sentence of a former Assembly, gave rise to a warm discussion; in the course of which, Dr. Robertson, supported by a few of his friends, contended for the expediency of a severe and exemplary sentence. But this doctrine was then so little understood or relished, that he was left in an inconsiderable minority.

The *Commission* of that Assembly, at their meeting, in November 1751, ordered the Presbytery of Dunfermline, which had already been guilty of disobedience, to admit Mr. Richardson as minister of Inverkeithing; intimating to them, at the same time, that in case of their continued contumacy, the Commission was to proceed, at their next meeting in March, to a very high censure. The presbytery again disobeyed; and yet the Commission, with a preposterous lenity, suffered their conduct to pass with impunity. The inconsistency and inexpediency of this sentence were urged strenuously by Dr. Robertson and his

his friends, who in their *dissent*, or protest against it, have left a valuable record of the general principles on which they acted. The paper is still extant, and though evidently a hasty composition, bears, in various passages, the marks of Dr. Robertson's hand \*.

Dr. Robertson argued this cause in the General Assembly 1752; and, such was the impression made by the argument contained in the protest, and more fully illustrated in his speech, that the supreme court reversed the judgment of the Commission, and deposed one of the ministers of the presbytery of Dunfermline, for disobeying the orders of his superiors.

This decision was the complete triumph of the principles for which Dr. Robertson and his friends had struggled. It put an end to those temporary expedients and devices which had hitherto been adopted in the settlement of parishes: it put an end to those extraordinary committees which Assemblies had been in use to appoint for

\* Appendix, Note K.

relieving

relieving disobedient presbyteries from their duty ; and it administered to the inferior judicatories, as well as to individuals, an useful lesson of that subordination which the peace of society requires.

The success of these attempts had probably some effect in determining Dr. Robertson to continue his attention to the affairs of the church ; more especially, after his office in the University put it in his power to be returned annually as a representative to the General Assembly. By an uninterrupted attendance in that court for nearly twenty years, he acquired an intimate acquaintance with the whole train of its business ; while the influence which he thus secured was increased and confirmed by his conciliating manners ; by the charms of his conversation ; and by the celebrity of his name. He had the happiness also of being warmly supported by most of the friends who joined him in the Assembly 1751 ; and who, without any jealousy of the ascendancy which he possessed, arranged themselves with cordiality under his standard.

The

The period from his appointment as Principal of the University till his retreat from public life, came, accordingly, to be distinguished by the name of Dr. Robertson's *administration*: a name which implied, not any appointment from Government, nor any power in the distribution of favours; but merely the weight he derived from the confidence of a great majority of his brethren, who approved of the general principles on which he acted.

The circumstances which chiefly distinguished his system of policy were, *first*, a steady and uniform support of the law of patronage; and, *secondly*, an impartial exercise of the judicial power of the church \*.

In the former of these respects, his exertions are supposed, by his friends, not only to have produced in the ecclesiastical establishment a tranquillity unknown in former times; but to have contributed, in no small degree, to the peace and good order of the country. The public language

\* Appendix, Note L.

of the church seems to bear testimony to the prevalence of these ideas. For a long series of years annual instructions had been given to the *Commission*, “to make due “application to the King and Parliament, “for redress of the grievance of patronage, “in case a favourable opportunity for “doing so should occur.” But these instructions were omitted in 1784, soon after Dr. Robertson retired from the business of the Assembly; and they have never since been renewed.

A systematical regularity, to which the church of Scotland had been little accustomed, in the exercise of its judicial power, was another effect of the ascendant which Dr. Robertson possessed in the conduct of its business.

A court so popular in its constitution as the General Assembly, is but ill calculated for the patient and dispassionate investigation necessary for the administration of justice. As its annual sittings, too, continue only for a few days, its mode of procedure (irregular and loose as it is in many respects) is very imperfectly understood by the

the great majority of clerical members, who enjoy a seat in it only once in four or five years: hence, an inattention to forms; and a disposition to undervalue their importance, when they appear to stand in the way of immediate expediency. To correct, as far as possible, this unfortunate bias, inherent in the constitution of all popular tribunals, Dr. Robertson felt it to be his duty to employ all his abilities; convinced, that a wise and impartial administration of justice can only be effectually secured by a strict adherence to established rules. A complete acquaintance with these, which he soon acquired from his regular attendance on the deliberations of the Assembly, gave him a decided superiority over those who were only occasionally members; and he was enabled gradually to enforce their strict observance by the confidence which was generally reposed in his principles and his talents.

Such were the objects which Dr. Robertson had chiefly in view as an ecclesiastical leader, and which he prosecuted, during thirty years, with so great steadiness and

success, that not only the system introduced by him continues still in vigor, but the decisions which he dictated form a sort of *Common Law* of the church \*."—With respect to the various incidental discussions in which he was, on different occasions, called on to take an active concern, it is impossible for me to enter into details. One of these, however, which occurred towards the close of his public life, is of too memorable a nature to be passed over in silence.—

The disturbances occasioned in Scotland in 1779, by the proposed extension to that part of the kingdom of the repeal of the penal laws against Roman Catholics, are well known to all who have the slightest acquaintance with the history of that period; and are still fresh in the recollection of the greater part of this Society. Some of us too are able to bear testimony, from what fell under our own immediate observation, to the firmness and tranquillity

\* Thus far I have availed myself of Dr. Hill's communication. A more full illustration of some of the particulars here stated, will be found in the Appendix.

which

which Dr. Robertson displayed at a very critical juncture; when, after repeated acts of successful and unpunished outrage, committed in different parts of this city, a furious populace threatened an attack on his house, and were only restrained by a military force, from sacrificing his life to their vengeance.

The leading principles which on that occasion directed his conduct in the church courts, will be best understood from a statement of facts, which formed part of one of his speeches in the subsequent Assembly \*.

“ The first intimation I had of any “ intention to grant relief to Papists from “ the rigor of penal statutes, was in the

\* The following extract is transcribed, with some trifling verbal corrections, from an account of the proceedings of the General Assembly, published in the Scots Magazine for 1779. As the account in general (I am assured) is executed with correctness and impartiality, the *substance* of Dr. Robertson's speech may be presumed to be faithfully stated; but, in other respects, ample allowances must be made for the inaccuracies to be expected from an anonymous reporter, writing (as is probable) from memory, or from imperfect notes.

“ news-papers. Though I had observed  
“ with pleasure, the rapid progress of  
“ liberal sentiments in this enlightened  
“ age; though I knew that science and  
“ philosophy had diffused the spirit of  
“ toleration through almost every part of  
“ Europe; yet I was so well acquainted  
“ with the deep-rooted aversion of Britons  
“ to the doctrines and spirit of Popery,  
“ that I suspected this motion for giving  
“ relief to Papists to be premature. I  
“ was afraid, on the one hand, that the  
“ liberal sentiments of those by whom it  
“ was made might induce them to grant  
“ too much. I dreaded, on the other, that  
“ past offences might be imputed to the  
“ Catholics of the present age, and exclude  
“ them from that degree of indulgence,  
“ which I considered as no less beneficial  
“ to the nation, than suitable to the spirit  
“ of the Gospel. But when I observed  
“ the uncommon unanimity with which  
“ the bill was carried through both Houses;  
“ when I saw Ministry and Opposition  
“ vying with each other in activity to  
“ forward it; when I beheld that respect-  
“ able

“ able body who assume to themselves the  
“ distinguishing appellation of *Old Whigs*  
“ taking the lead avowedly in supporting  
“ it; when I observed a Bench of Bishops,  
“ of whom I may justly say, that, in learn-  
“ ing, in decency of manners, and in zeal  
“ for the Protestant religion, they are not  
“ inferior to any of their predecessors,  
“ co-operating heartily with the other pro-  
“ moters of that bill, my curiosity to know  
“ precisely the nature and extent of the  
“ indulgence granted, became very great.  
“ Upon perusing the bill itself, all my  
“ apprehensions vanished; the relief given  
“ to Papists appeared neither too great nor  
“ too little. By the statute of last session,  
“ no political power is conferred on Papists.  
“ They are not entitled to hold any public  
“ office. They can neither elect, nor be  
“ elected members of any corporation;  
“ far less can they chuse, or be chosen,  
“ members of the House of Commons. In  
“ consequence of this statute, an English  
“ Papist has not acquired the privileges  
“ of a citizen; he is restored only to the  
“ rights of a man. By a law passed in a

“ season of jealousy, alarm, and faction,  
“ Papists were rendered incapable of in-  
“ heriting property by succession or con-  
“ veyance, of transmitting it to others, or  
“ of acquiring it by purchase; and the  
“ ecclesiastics of that religion who should  
“ take upon them the education of youth,  
“ were to be punished with perpetual im-  
“ prisonment. It is from these penalties  
“ and disabilities alone, that they are now  
“ relieved. They may now inherit, they  
“ may devise, they may purchase. For-  
“ merly they were in a state of proscription  
“ and incapacity: now they are rendered  
“ what the law calls *personæ*; capable of  
“ legal functions in the possession and dis-  
“ posal of their own property. Nor are  
“ these concessions gratuitous. Before a  
“ Papist can enjoy the benefit of them, he  
“ must swear allegiance to our gracious  
“ Sovereign; he must abjure the Pre-  
“ tender; he must reject as an impious  
“ position, that it is lawful to murder or  
“ destroy any person under pretence of  
“ their being heretics; he must declare it  
“ to be an unchristian principle, that faith  
“ is

“ is not to be kept with heretics ; he must  
“ disclaim the power of the Pope to dis-  
“ pense with the obligation of an oath ;  
“ he must swear, that it is no article of his  
“ faith that a Pope or Council can either  
“ depose princes, or exercise any civil or  
“ temporal jurisdiction within this realm :  
“ in short, he must give every security that  
“ the most scrupulous anxiety could devise,  
“ to demean himself as a loyal and peace-  
“ able subject. These slender rights, the  
“ lowest a man can claim or enjoy in a social  
“ state, are the amount of all the mighty  
“ and dreaded acquisitions made by Papists  
“ in virtue of this law. I rejoiced in the  
“ temperate wisdom of the legislature, and  
“ foresaw, that a wealthy body of subjects  
“ in England, and a very numerous one in  
“ Ireland, would, instead of continuing  
“ adverse to a government which treated  
“ them with rigour, become attached to  
“ their king and country by the most  
“ powerful of all ties, gratitude for favours  
“ received, and desire of securing the con-  
“ tinuance of favour by dutiful conduct.  
“ With such views of the salutary effects

“ of the repeal, it was impossible not to  
“ wish that the benefit of it might be  
“ extended to the Roman Catholics in  
“ Scotland.      \*      \*      \*

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“ As soon, however, as I perceived the  
“ extent and violence of the flame which  
“ the discussion of this subject had kindled  
“ in Scotland, my ideas concerning the  
“ expedience at this juncture of the mea-  
“ sure in question, began to alter. For,  
“ although I did think, and I do still be-  
“ lieve, that if the Protestants in this  
“ country had acquiesced in the repeal as  
“ quietly as our brethren in England and  
“ Ireland, a fatal blow would have been  
“ given to Popery in the British dominions;  
“ I knew, that in legislation, the fenti-  
“ ments and dispositions of the people for  
“ whom laws are made should be attended  
“ to with care. I remembered that one  
“ of the wisest men of antiquity declared,  
“ that he had framed for his fellow-citizens  
“ not the best laws, but the best laws  
“ which they could bear. I recollect  
“ with

“ with reverence, that the Divine Legis-  
“ lator himself, accommodating his dis-  
“ peniations to the frailty of his subjects,  
“ had given the Israelites for a season,  
“ *statutes which were not good.* Even the  
“ prejudices of the people are, in my  
“ opinion, respectable; and an indulgent  
“ legislature ought not unnecessarily to run  
“ counter to them. It appeared manifestly  
“ to be sound policy, in the present tem-  
“ per of the people, to soothe rather than  
“ to irritate them; and however ill-  
“ founded their apprehensions might be,  
“ some concession was now requisite in  
“ order to remove them: In every argu-  
“ ment against the repeal of the penal  
“ laws, what seemed chiefly to alarm my  
“ brethren who were adverse to it, was  
“ the liberty which, as they supposed, was  
“ given by the act of last session to Popish  
“ ecclesiastics to open schools, and take  
“ upon them the public instruction of  
“ youth. In order to quiet their fears  
“ with respect to this, I applied to his Ma-  
“ jesty’s Advocate and Solicitor-General,

“ and by their permission, I proposed to  
“ a respectable minister and elder of this  
“ church, who deservedly possess much  
“ credit with the opposers of this repeal,  
“ that such provisos should be inserted in  
“ the bill which was to be moved in Par-  
“ liament, for restraining the Popish clergy  
“ in this point, as would obviate every  
“ danger apprehended. These gentlemen  
“ fairly told me, that, if such a proposition  
“ had been made more early, they did not  
“ doubt that it might have produced good  
“ effects; but, now matters were gone so  
“ far, that they were persuaded nothing  
“ less would satisfy the people than a  
“ resolution to drop the bill altogether.  
“ Persuaded of the truth of what they  
“ represented, seeing the alarm spread  
“ rapidly in every quarter, and knowing  
“ well how imperfectly transactions in this  
“ country are understood in the other part  
“ of the island, I considered it as my duty  
“ to lay before his Majesty’s servants in  
“ London, a fair state of the sentiments  
“ of the people in Scotland. My station  
“ in

“ in the church, I thought, intitled me to  
“ take this liberty in a matter purely  
“ ecclesiastical. I flattered myself, that  
“ my avowed approbation and strenuous  
“ support of a measure which had been  
“ unhappily so much misunderstood,  
“ might give some weight to my repre-  
“ sentations. I informed them, that the  
“ design of extending the repeal of the  
“ penal statutes of King William to  
“ Scotland, had excited a very general  
“ alarm: that the spirit of opposition to  
“ this measure spread among the King’s  
“ most loyal and attached subjects in this  
“ country: that nothing would calm and  
“ appease them, but the relinquishing all  
“ thoughts of such a bill: that the pro-  
“ curing of the intended relaxation for a  
“ handful of Catholics, was not an advan-  
“ tage to be put in competition with the  
“ imprudence of irritating so great a body  
“ of well-affected subjects: that if the  
“ measure were persisted in, fatal effects  
“ would follow; and no man, how great  
“ soever his sagacity might be, could ven-  
“ ture to foretel what would be the extent  
“ of

“ of the danger, and what the violent  
“ operations of an incensed populace :  
“ that, groundless as the fears of the people  
“ might be, it was prudent to quiet them :  
“ and that the same wisdom and modera-  
“ tion which had induced Government,  
“ some years ago, to repeal the Act for na-  
“ turalizing the Jews, in consequence of  
“ an alarm, as ill-grounded in the southern  
“ parts of the island, ought now to make  
“ a similar concession, from indulgence to  
“ the prejudice of the people on this side  
“ of the Tweed.

“ Such has been the tenor of my con-  
“ duct. While I thought a repeal of the  
“ penal statutes would produce good effects,  
“ I supported it openly : when I foresaw  
“ bad consequences from persisting in a  
“ measure which I had warmly approved,  
“ I preferred the public good to my own  
“ private sentiments ; I honestly remon-  
“ strated against it ; and I have the satis-  
“ faction to think, that I am the only  
“ private person (as far as I know) in  
“ Scotland, who applied to those in power,  
“ in

“ in order to prevent this much dreaded  
“ repeal, which has been represented as  
“ the subversion of every sacred right for  
“ which our ancestors contended and  
“ suffered.”

\*       \*       \*       \*

The last Assembly in which Dr. Robertson sat was that of 1780. While his faculties were yet vigorous, his constitution unbroken, and his influence undiminished, he chose to withdraw from the active scenes in which he had so long borne a part, and to consecrate the remainder of his life to the quiet pursuits of study, and to the pastoral duties of his profession. His retreat was deeply regretted and sincerely felt by his friends; nor was it less lamented by many individuals of the opposite party in the church, who, while they resisted his principles of ecclesiastical policy, loved his candour, and respected his integrity \*.

Among these, there is one, whose liberal and affectionate zeal in embalming the me-

\* Appendix, Note M.

emory

mory of a political antagonist, recalls to our recollection, amidst the unrelenting rancour which disgraces the factions of modern times, the memorable tribute which *Metellus* paid to the virtues of *Scipio* on the day of his funeral: *Ite, Filii, celebrate exequias; nunquam Civis majoris funus videbitis* \*.—I need scarcely, after what I have hinted, mention to the Society the name of Dr. Erskine; of whose Sermon on the death of his colleague, it is difficult to say, whether it reflects greater honour on the character of the Writer, or of him whom it commèmorates. The Author will, I hope, pardon me for transcribing one passage, which is intimately connected with this part of my subject, and which combines, with a testimony of inestimable value to Dr. Robertson's fame, some important information which I could not supply from any source of equal authority.

“ His speeches in church courts were  
“ admired by those whom they did not

• Plin. Hist. Nat. vii. 44.

“ convince,

“convince, and acquired and preserved  
“him an influence over a majority in  
“them, which none before him enjoyed:  
“though his measures were sometimes  
“new, and warmly, and with great  
“strength of argument opposed, both  
“from the presb, and in the General  
“Assembly. To this influence many  
“causes contributed:—his firm adherence  
“to the general principles of church  
“policy, which he early adopted; his  
“sagacity in forming plans; his steadi-  
“ness in executing them; his quick dis-  
“cernment of whatever might hinder or  
“promote his designs; his boldness in  
“encountering difficulties; his presence  
“of mind in improving every occasional  
“advantage; the address with which,  
“when he saw it necessary, he could  
“make an honourable retreat; and his  
“skill in stating a vote, and seizing the  
“favourable moment for ending a debate,  
“and urging a decision. He guided and  
“governed others, without seeming to  
“assume any superiority over them: and  
“fixed and strengthened his power, by

“ often, in matters of form and expediency,  
“ preferring the opinions of those with  
“ whom he acted, to his own. In former  
“ times, hardly any rose up to speak in  
“ the General Assembly, till called upon  
“ by the *Moderator*, unless men advanced  
“ in years, of high rank, or of established  
“ characters. His example and influence  
“ encouraged young men of abilities to  
“ take their share of public business; and  
“ thus deprived *Moderators* of an engine  
“ for preventing causes being fairly and  
“ impartially discussed. The power of  
“ others, who formerly had in some mea-  
“ sure guided ecclesiastical affairs, was  
“ derived from ministers of state, and  
“ expired with their fall. His remained  
“ unhurt amidst frequent changes of ad-  
“ ministration. Great men in office were  
“ always ready to countenance him, to  
“ co-operate with him, and to avail them-  
“ selves of his aid. But, he judged for  
“ himself, and scorned to be their slave;  
“ or to submit to receive their instructions.  
“ Hence, his influence, not confined to  
“ men

“ men of mercenary views, extended to  
“ many of a free and independent spirit,  
“ who supported, because they approved,  
“ his measures; which others, from the  
“ same independent spirit, thought it their  
“ duty steadily to oppose.

“ Deliberate in forming his judgment,  
“ but, when formed, not easily moved to  
“ renounce it, he sometimes viewed the  
“ altered plans of others with too suspicious  
“ an eye. Hence, there were able and  
“ worthy men, of whom he expressed  
“ himself less favourably, and whose latter  
“ appearances in church judicatories, he  
“ censured as inconsistent with principles  
“ which they had formerly professed:  
“ while they maintained, that the system  
“ of managing church affairs was changed,  
“ not their opinions or conduct. Still,  
“ however, keen and determined opposition  
“ to his schemes of ecclesiastical policy,  
“ neither extinguished his esteem, nor for-  
“ feited his friendly offices, when he saw  
“ opposition carried on without rancour,  
“ and when he believed that it originated  
“ from conscience and principle, not from  
“ personal

“ personal animosity, or envy, or ambition \*.”

I shall not presume to add any thing in illustration of these remarks. The greater part of them relate to transactions of which I had no immediate knowledge, and of which I am not a competent judge; and, at any rate, no testimony of mine could increase the value of praise from so able and so impartial a hand. Of one quality, however, ascribed to Dr. Robertson by his colleague,—his ability in debate,—I may be allowed to express my own opinion; as I was often led by curiosity, in my early years, to witness the proceedings of the court where it was principally displayed; and which, since the union of the kingdoms, is all that exists in Scotland, to preserve the semblance of popular deliberation. This part of his fame will soon rest on tradition only; but by many who are still able to judge from their own recollection, I shall not be accused of exaggeration, when I say, that in *some* of the

\* Discourses, &c. by John Erskine, D. D. p. 271.

most

most essential qualifications of a speaker, he was entitled to rank with the first names which have, in our times, adorned the British Senate.—Nor was the opposition with which he had to contend unworthy of his exertions; formidable as it long was in zeal and numbers, and aided by a combination of talents which will not easily be equalled; the copious and fervid declamation of *Croftie*; the classical, argumentative, and commanding eloquence of *Dick*; and the powerful, though coarse, invective of *Freebairn*, whose name would, in a different age, have been transmitted to posterity with those of the rustic and intrepid apostles who freed their country from the hierarchy of Rome \*.

The characteristic of Dr. Robertson's eloquence was *persuasion*;—mild, rational, and conciliating, yet manly and dignified. In early life, when forced as a partisan to

\* Andrew Croftie Esq. Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Advocates. Robert Dick, D. D. one of the Ministers of Edinburgh. The Rev. Mr. Freebairn, Minister of Dunbarton. All of them died many years before Dr. Robertson.

expose himself to the contentious heat of popular discussion, he is said to have been distinguished by promptitude and animation in repelling the attacks which he occasionally encountered ; but long before the period during which I knew him, he had become the acknowledged head of his party, and generally spoke last in the debate ; resuming the arguments on both sides, with such perspicuity of arrangement and expression ; such respect to his antagonists ; and such an air of candour and earnestness in every thing he said, that he often united the suffrages of the House in favour of the conclusions he wished to establish.

His pronunciation and accents were strongly marked with the peculiarities of his country ; nor was this defect compensated by the graces of his delivery. His manner, however, though deficient in ease, was interesting and impressive ; and had something in its general effect, neither unsuitable to his professional station, nor to the particular style of his eloquence. His diction was rich and splendid, and abounded with

with the same beauties that characterise his writings.

In these details with respect to his ecclesiastical politics, I may perhaps be thought by some to have been more circumstantial than was necessary; but, as he himself always dwelt on that subject with peculiar satisfaction, I could not pass it over more lightly than I have done. Nor is it so foreign, as it may at first appear, to his character as an Historian; for, narrow and obscure as his field of action was, it afforded him a closer view than most authors have enjoyed, of the intrigues of contending factions; and an opportunity of studying, though on a scale comparatively small, the passions that decide the fate of nations. In tracing, accordingly, the springs of human conduct, his sagacity is strongly impressed with that knowledge of the world, which experience alone can communicate; and, even in those characteristical portraits, on which he has lavished all the decorations of his style, he is seldom if ever misled, either by the affectation of eloquence, or of meta-

physical refinement, from a faithful adherence to truth and nature.

I would willingly enlarge on his merits in a different department of his professional employments, of which I am more competent to judge from personal knowledge, were I not afraid, that my own academical habits might lead me to attach an interest to what would appear of little moment to others. I shall therefore only remark, in general, his assiduous attention, amidst his various occupations, both speculative and active, to the minutest duties of his office as Head of the University; duties, which nothing but his habits of arrangement and the severest œconomy of his time, could have enabled him to discharge with so little appearance of hurry or inconvenience. The valuable accession of books which the public library received while under his administration, was chiefly owing to his prudent and exact application of the very slender funds appropriated to that establishment; the various societies, both literary and medical, which, in this place,

place, have long contributed so essentially to the improvement of the rising generation, were, most of them, either planned or reformed under his direction and patronage; and if, as a seat of learning, Edinburgh has, of late more than formerly, attracted the notice of the world, much must be ascribed to the influence of his example, and to the lustre of his name. The good sense, temper, and address, with which he presided for thirty years in our University meetings, were attended with effects no less essential to our prosperity; and are attested by a fact which is perhaps without a parallel in the annals of any other literary community; that during the whole of that period, there did not occur a single question which was not terminated by an unanimous decision.

In consequence of the various connexions with society, which arose from these professional duties, and from the interest which he was led to take, both by his official situation, and the activity of his public

spirit, in the literary or the patriotic undertakings of others\*, a considerable portion of Dr. Robertson's leisure was devoted to conversation and company. No man enjoyed these with more relish; and few have possessed the same talents to add to their attractions.

A rich stock of miscellaneous information, acquired from books and from an extensive intercourse with the world, together with a perfect acquaintance at all times with the topics of the day, and the soundest sagacity and good sense applied to the occurrences of common life, rendered him the most agreeable and instructive of companions. He seldom aimed at wit; but, with his intimate friends, he often indulged a sportive and fanciful species of humour. He delighted in good-natured, characteristical anecdotes of his acquaintance, and added powerfully to their effect by his own enjoyment in relating them. He was, in a remarkable degree, susceptible of the ludi-

\* Appendix, Note N.

crous:

crous: but, on no occasion, did he forget the dignity of his character, or the decorum of his profession; nor did he even lose sight of that classical taste which adorned his compositions. His turn of expression was correct and pure; sometimes, perhaps, inclining more than is expected, in the carelessness of a social hour, to formal and artificial periods; but it was stamped with his own manner no less than his premeditated style: it was always the language of a superior and a cultivated mind, and it embellished every subject on which he spoke. In the company of strangers, he increased his exertions to amuse and to inform; and the splendid variety of his conversation was commonly the chief circumstance on which they dwelt in enumerating his talents;— and yet, I must acknowledge, for my own part, that much as I always admired his powers when they were thus called forth, I enjoyed his society less, than when I saw him in the circle of his intimates, or in the bosom of his family.

It only now remains for me to mention his exemplary diligence in the discharge

of his pastoral duties ; a diligence which, instead of relaxing as he advanced in life, became more conspicuous, when his growing infirmities withdrew him from business, and lessened the number of his active engagements. As long as his health allowed him, he preached regularly every Sunday ; and he continued to do so occasionally, till within a few months of his death.

The particular style of his pulpit eloquence may be judged of from the specimen which has been long in the hands of the public ; and it is not improbable, that the world might have been favoured with others of equal excellence, if he had not lost, before his removal from Gladsmuir, a volume of sermons which he had composed with care. The facility with which he could arrange his ideas, added to the correctness and fluency of his extemporary language, encouraged him to lay aside the practice of writing, excepting on extraordinary occasions ; and to content himself, in general, with such short notes as might recal to his memory the principal topics on which he meant to enlarge. To the value, however,

however, and utility of these unpremeditated sermons we have the honourable testimony of his learned and excellent colleague, who heard him preach every week for more than twenty years. "His dis-  
"courses from this place," says Dr. Erskine,  
"were so plain, that the most illiterate  
"might easily understand them, and yet  
"so correct and elegant that they could  
"not incur their censure, whose taste was  
"more refined. For several years before  
"his death, he seldom wrote his sermons  
"fully, or exactly committed his older  
"sermons to memory; though, had I not  
"learned this from himself, I should not  
"have suspected it; such was the variety  
"and fitness of his illustrations, the accu-  
"racy of his method, and the propriety  
"of his style."

His health began apparently to decline in the end of the year 1791. Till then, it had been more uniformly good than might have been expected from his studious habits; but, about this period, he suddenly discovered strong symptoms of jaundice, which gradually undermined his constitution, and terminated

terminated at length in a lingering and fatal illness. He had the prospect of death long before him ; a prospect deeply afflicting to his family and his friends; but of which, without any visible abatement in his spirits, he happily availed himself, to adorn the doctrines which he had long taught, by an example of fortitude and of Christian resignation. In the concluding stage of his disorder, he removed from Edinburgh to *Grange House* in the neighbourhood, where he had the advantage of a freer air, and a more quiet situation, and (what he valued more than most men) the pleasure of rural objects, and of a beautiful landscape. While he was able to walk abroad, he commonly passed a part of the day in a small garden, enjoying the simple gratifications it afforded with all his wonted relish. Some who now hear me will long remember,—among the trivial yet interesting incidents which marked these last weeks of his memorable life,—his daily visits to the fruit-trees (which were then in blossom), and the smile with which he, more than once, contrasted the interest he took in their progress, with

with the event which was to happen before their maturity. At his particular desire, I saw him (for the last time) on the 4th of June 1793, when his weakness confined him to his couch, and his articulation was already beginning to fail: and it is in obedience to a request with which he then honoured me, that I have ventured, without consulting my own powers, to offer this tribute to his memory. He died on the 11th of the same month, in the 71st year of his age.

I have already hinted at his domestic happiness. Nothing was wanting to render it perfect while he lived; and, at his death, he had the satisfaction to leave, in prosperous circumstances, a numerous family, united to each other and to their excellent mother by the tenderest affection. His eldest son, an eminent lawyer at the Scotch bar, has been only prevented by the engagements of an active profession, from sustaining his father's literary name; while his two younger sons, both of whom very early embraced a military life, have carried his vigour and enterprize into a different career

career of ambition \*. His eldest daughter is married to Mr. Brydone, the well-known author of one of our most elegant and popular books of Travels. Another is the widow of the late John Russell Esq. Clerk to the Signet, and one of the members of this Society.

The general view which has been already given of Dr. Robertson's occupations and habits, supersedes the necessity of attempting a formal delineation of his character. To the particulars, however, which have been incidentally mentioned in the course of this biographical sketch, it may not be unimportant to add, that the same sagacity and good-sense which so eminently distinguished him as a Writer, guided his conduct in life, and rendered his counsels of inestimable value to his friends. He was not forward in offering advice; but when consulted, as he was very frequently, by his younger acquaintance, he entered into their concerns with the most lively interest, and seemed to have a pleasure and a pride in

\* Appendix, Note O.

imparting to them all the lights of his experience and wisdom. Good-sense was indeed the most prominent feature in his intellectual character ; and it is unquestionably of all the qualities of the understanding, that which essentially constitutes superiority of mind : for, although we are sometimes apt to appropriate the appellation of genius to certain peculiarities in the intellectual habits, it is he only who distinguishes himself from the rest of mankind, by thinking better than they on the same subjects, who fairly brings his powers into comparison with others. This was in a remarkable degree the case with Dr. Robertson. He was not eminent for metaphysical acuteness ; nor did he easily enter into speculations involving mathematical or mechanical ideas ; but, in those endowments which lay the foundation of successful conduct, and which fit a man to acquire an influence over others, he had no superior. Among those who have, like him, devoted the greater part of life to study, perhaps it would be difficult to find his equal.

His

His practical acquaintance with human nature was great, and he possessed the soundest and most accurate notions of the characters of those with whom he was accustomed to associate. In that quick penetration, indeed, which reads the soul, and estimates the talents of others by a sort of intuition, he was surpassed by many ; and I have often known him misled by first impressions : but where he had an opportunity of continuing his observations for a length of time, he seldom failed in forming conclusions equally just, refined, and profound. In a general knowledge of the world, and of the ways of men, his superiority was striking and indisputable ; still more so, in my opinion, than in the judgments he formed of individuals. Nor is this surprising, when we consider the joint influence of his habits as an historian, and as a political leader.

Too much cannot be said of his moral qualities. Exemplary and amiable in the offices of private life, he exhibited in his public conduct, a rare union of political firmness

firmness with candour and moderation.—“ He enjoyed,” says Dr. Erskine, “ the bounties of Providence without running into riot ; was temperate without austerity ; condescending and affable without meanness ; and in expence neither sordid nor prodigal. He could feel an injury, and yet bridle his passion ; was grave, not full ; steady, not obstinate ; friendly, not officious ; prudent and cautious, not timid.”—The praise is liberal ; and it is expressed with the cordial warmth of friendship ; but it comes from one who had the best opportunity of knowing the truth, as he had enjoyed Dr. Robertson’s intimacy from his childhood, and was afterwards, for more than twenty years, his colleague in the same church ; while his zealous attachment to a different system of ecclesiastical government, though it never impaired his affection for the companion of his youth, exempts him from any suspicion of undue partiality.

In point of stature Dr. Robertson was rather above the middle size ; and his form, though

though it did not convey the idea of much activity, announced vigour of body and a healthful constitution. His features were regular and manly; and his eye spoke at once good sense and good-humour. He appeared to greatest advantage in his complete clerical dress; and was more remarkable for gravity and dignity in discharging the functions of his public stations, than for ease or grace in private society. His portrait by Reynolds, painted about twenty years ago, is an admirable likeness; and fortunately, (for the colours are already much faded,) all its spirit is preserved in an excellent mezzotinto. At the request of his colleagues in the University\*, who were anxious to have some memorial of him placed in the public library, he sat again, a few months before his death, to Mr. Raeburn; at a time when his altered and sickly aspect rendered the task of the artist peculiarly difficult. The picture, however, is not only worthy, in every respect, of

\* Appendix, Note P.

Mr. Raeburn's high and deserved reputation, but to those who were accustomed to see Dr. Robertson at this interesting period, derives an additional value from an air of languor and feebleness, which strongly marked his appearance during his long decline.

I should feel myself happy, if, in concluding this Memoir, I could indulge the hope, that it may be the means of completing and finishing that picture which his writings exhibit of his mind. In attempting to delineate its characteristic features, I have certainly possessed one advantage;—that I had long an opportunity of knowing and studying the original; and that my portrait, such as it is, is correctly copied from my own impressions. I am sensible, at the same time, that much more might have been accomplished by a writer whose pursuits were more congenial than mine to Dr. Robertson's: nor would any thing have induced me to depart, so far as I have now done,

from the ordinary course of my own studies, but my respect for the last wish of a much lamented friend, expressed at a moment when nothing remained for me but silent acquiescence.

## APPENDIX.

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### NOTE A. p. 15.

THE information contained in the following note, (for which I am indebted to the friendship of Dr. Carlyle,) cannot fail to be acceptable to those, to whom the Literary History of Scotland is an object of curiosity.

“ The *Select Society* owed its rise to the ingenious Allan Ramsay, (son of the Poet of that name,) and was intended for Philosophical Inquiry, and the improvement of the Members in the Art of Speaking. They met for the first time in the Advocates’ Library, in May 1754, and consisted only of fifteen, who had been nominated and called together by Mr. Ramsay and two or three of his friends. At that meeting they formed themselves into a society, into which the Members were ever after elected by ballot, and who met regularly every Friday evening, during the sittings of the Court of Session, both in summer and winter.

“ This Society continued to flourish for several years, and became so fashionable, that, in 1759, their number amounted to more than 130; which included all the *Literati* of Edinburgh and its neighbourhood, and many of the Nobility and Gentry, who, though a few of them only took any share in the debates, thought themselves so well entertained, and instructed, that they gave punctual attendance. In this Society, which remained in vigour for six or seven years, Dr. Robertson made a conspicuous figure. By his means it was, and by the appearances made by a few of his brethren, that a new lustre was thrown on their order. From the Revolution, (when the Church had been chiefly filled with incumbents that were ill-educated,) down to this period, the Clergy of the Established Church had always been considered in a subordinate light, and as far inferior to the Members of the other Learned Professions, in knowledge and liberal views. But now, when compared together, on this theatre for the exhibition of talents, they were found to be entitled to at least an equal share of praise; and having been long depressed, they were, in compensation, as usual, raised full as high as they deserved. When the Select Society commenced, it was not foreseen that “ the

“ the History of Scotland during the reign of  
“ Mary, the Tragedy of Douglas, and the  
“ Epigoniad, were to issue so soon from three  
“ Gentlemen of the Ecclesiastical Order.

“ When the Society was on the decline, by  
“ the evocations of many of its most distin-  
“ guished members, and the natural abatement  
“ of that ardor which is excited by novelty and  
“ emulation, it was thought proper to elect fixed  
“ presidents to preside in their turns, whose duty  
“ it was to open the question to be debated upon,  
“ that a fair field might be laid before the  
“ Speakers. It was observed of Dr. Robertson,  
“ who was one of those Presidents, that whereas  
“ most of the others in their previous discourses  
“ exhausted the subject so much that there was  
“ no room for debate, he gave only such brief,  
“ but artful sketches, as served to suggest ideas,  
“ without leading to a decision.

“ Among the most distinguished Speakers in  
“ the Select Society were Sir Gilbert Elliott,  
“ Mr. Wedderburn, Mr. Andrew Pringle, Lord  
“ Kaims, Mr. Walter Stewart, Lord Elibank,  
“ and Dr. Robertson. The Honourable Charles  
“ Townshend spoke once. David Hume and  
“ Adam Smith never opened their lips.

“ The Society was also much obliged to  
“ Dr. Alexander Monro, Senior, Sir Alexander

“ Dick, and Mr. Patrick Murray, Advocate,  
 “ who, by their constant attendance and readi-  
 “ ness on every subject, supported the debate  
 “ during the first year of the establishment, when  
 “ otherwise it would have gone heavily on. The  
 “ same part was afterwards more ably performed  
 “ by Lord Monboddo, Lord Elibank, and the  
 “ Reverend William Wilkie, all of whom had  
 “ the peculiar talent of supporting their para-  
 “ doxical tenets by an inexhaustible fund of  
 “ humour and argument.”

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A printed List of the Members having been  
 accidentally preserved by Dr. Carlyle, I need  
 make no apology for giving it a place in this  
 Appendix, as a memorial of the state of Literary  
 Society in Edinburgh, forty years ago.

LIST of the MEMBERS of the SELECT SOCIETY,  
 17th October, 1759.

Rev. John Jardine, Minister in Edinburgh.  
 Francis Home, M. D.

Adam Smith, Professor of Ethics at Glasgow.  
 Alex. Wedderburn (now Lord Chancellor).  
 Allan Ramsay (afterwards Painter to His  
 Majesty).

James

James Burnet, Advocate (afterwards Lord Monboddo).

John Campbell, Advocate (now Lord Stonefield).

Rev. Alex. Carlyle, Minister at Inveresk.

William Johnston, Advocate (now Sir William Pulteney).

James Stevenson Rogers, Advocate.

David Hume.

John Swinton, Advocate (afterwards Lord Swinton).

Patrick Murray, Advocate.

Patrick Hume of Billy, Advocate.

Alex. Stevenson, M. D.

Walter Stewart, Advocate.

John Home (Author of Douglas).

Robert Alexander, Merchant.

James Russell (afterwards Professor of Natural Philosophy).

George Cockburn, Advocate.

David Clerk, M. D.

George Brown (Lord Colston).

Rev. Will. Robertson, Minister in Edinburgh.

John Fletcher (now Gen. Fletcher Campbell).

Alex. Agnew, Advocate.

John Hope, M. D.

Sir David Dalrymple, Advocate (afterwards Lord Hailes).

Gilbert Elliot, one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

Sir Harry Erskine, Bart.

Rev. Hugh Blair, one of the Ministers of Edinburgh.

Andrew Stewart (now M. P. for Weymouth).

Charles Fysch Palmer.

George Morrison, Advocate.

Andrew Pringle (Lord Aylmoor).

Alex. Monro, Sen. M. D.

David Ross, Advocate (now Lord Ankerville).

Right Hon. Patrick Lord Elibank.

Earl of Glasgow.

Sir Alex. Dick, Bart.

Robert Arbuthnot (now Secretary to the Board of Trustees for Manufactures, &c.).

Adam Fairholme, Merchant in Edinburgh.

Major James Edmonstone.

Charles Hamilton Gordon, Advocate.

James Ferguson of Pitfour, Jun. Advocate.

David Kennedy, Advocate (afterwards Earl of Cassils).

John Dalrymple, Advocate (now Baron of Exchequer).

Major Robert Murray (afterwards Sir Robert Murray).

Rev.

Rev. Rob. Wallace, Minister in Edinburgh.  
John Gordon, Advocate.  
Alex. Maxwell, Merchant in Edinburgh.  
John Coutts, Merchant in Edinburgh.  
Will. Tod, Merchant in Edinburgh.  
Thomas Millar (afterwards President of the  
Court of Session).  
Robert Chalmers.  
Mr. Baron Grant.  
Captain James Stewart.  
Sir John Stewart, Advocate.  
James Guthrie, Merchant.  
Charles Congalton, Surgeon in Edinburgh.  
Rev. Will. Wilkie, Minister at Ratho.  
John Monro, Advocate.  
Captain Robert Douglas.  
Alex. Tait, Writer in Edinburgh.  
George Chalmers, Merchant in Edinburgh.  
Colonel Oughton (afterwards Sir Adolphus  
Oughton).  
John Adam, Architect.  
Robert White, M. D.  
Henry Home (Lord Kaims).  
James Montgomery, Advocate (now Chief  
Baron of Exchequer).  
David Dalrymple, Advocate (afterwards  
Lord Westhall).  
Rev. George Kay, Minister in Edinburgh.  
George

George Muir, Clerk of Justiciary.

George Clerk (afterwards Sir George Clerk).

Lieut. Col. Archibald Montgomery (afterwards Earl of Eglinton).

Right Honourable Lord Deskfoord.

Robt. Berry, Advocate.

Adam Austin, M. D.

Lieut. Col. Morgan.

George Drummond (Lord Provost of Edinburgh).

The Earl of Lauderdale.

Alex. Boswell (Lord Auchinleck).

Alex. Udney, Commissioner of Excise.

Rev. George Wishart, Minister in Edinburgh.

Right Honourable Lord Belhaven.

Francis Garden, Advocate (afterwards Lord Gardenstone).

David Rae, Advocate (now Lord Justice Clerk).

Mansfield Cardonnel, Commissioner of Excise.

Right Honourable Lord Aberdour.

John Murray of Philiphaugh, Advocate.

Will. Tytler, Writer to the Signet (Author of the *Vindication of Q. Mary*).

Colin Drummond, M. D.

Robert

Robert Dundas (afterwards President of the Court of Session).

Stamp Brooksbanks.

Wm. Nairne, Advocate (now Lord Dunnan).

James Adam, Architect.

Captain Charles Erskine.

Hugh Dalrymple, Advocate (Author of Rodondo).

James Hay, Surgeon.

Mr. Baron Erskine (afterwards Lord Alva).

John Clerk (Author of Naval Tactics).

John MacGowan, Jun. Writer in Edinburgh.

Earl of Galloway.

John Graham of Dougaldston.

James Carmichael, Writer to the Signet.

Adam Ferguson (afterwards Professor of Moral Philosophy).

George Drummond of Blair.

Will. Cullen, M.D.

Ilay Campbell, Advocate (now President of the Court of Session).

Alex. Murray, Advocate (afterwards Lord Henderland).

Rev. Robert Dick.

Right Honourable Lord Gray.

Earl of Errol.

James

**James Dewar**, Advocate.  
**Captain David Wedderburn**.  
**Major James Dalrymple**.  
**Archibald Hamilton, M. D.**  
**Andrew Cheap**.  
**Andrew Crosbie**, Advocate.  
**Earl of Aboyne**.  
**Adam Fergusson**, Advocate (now Sir Adam Fergusson).  
**Earl of Selkirk**.  
**John Turton**.  
**Cosmo Gordon** (afterwards one of the Barons of Exchequer).  
**Right Honourable Lord Gairlies**.  
**Earl of Sutherland**.  
**Captain Dougald Campbell**.  
**Honourable George Ramsay**, Advocate.  
**Earl of Roseberry**.  
**Earl of Cassils**.  
**William Graham**, Advocate.  
**John Pringle of Crichton**.  
**Right Honourable Charles Townshend**.  
**George Wallace**.

NOTE (B), p. 27.

From WILLIAM STRAHAN, Esq.  
to Dr. ROBERTSON.

Rev. Sir, London, Feb. 28, 1759.

WHEN I received your farewell letter on the conclusion of your history, I was determined not to answer it till I could tell you, with certainty, and from my own personal knowledge, what reception it met with in this place. And what I am going to tell you, I dare say you have had from many of your friends long ago. No matter for that. Every man, and especially one in my way, has an opportunity to hear the public sentiments through many different channels. I have now waited till I could be fully informed; and as I have been particularly solicitous to procure authentic intelligence, you will not be displeased at my confirming what you have heard before, as we love to see a piece of good news in the Gazette (excuse the vanity of the comparison) even though we have read it a month before in all the other papers.—I don't remember to have heard any book so universally approved by the best judges, for what are sold yet, have been only to such. The people in the country know nothing of it, unless from the advertisements; and *a History of Scotland* is no very enticing title.

—But

—But many of the first distinction in town have perused it with great satisfaction. They wonder how a Scotch parson, and who had never been out of Scotland, could be able to write in so correct, so clear, so manly, and so nervous a style. The Speaker of the House of Commons, in particular, prefers the style to that of Bolingbroke, and every body that I have either seen or heard of, think it one of the very best performances that has been exhibited for many years. As these are not superficial judges, you may be assured that the fame you have acquired will be permanent, and not only permanent, but extending daily. Next week you will see some extracts from it in the Chronicle, which will serve to give the people at a distance from town some idea of its excellence; but without that, or any thing else, the report of those who have read it in London, will soon spread its reputation; for the capital always gives the lead this way as well as in most other cases. The impression, therefore, certainly will be gone before another can be got ready. Mr. Millar has wrote to you already about revising it for another edition, and I think the sooner you send up some of the sheets, the better, that no time may be lost. Does not this answer your most sanguine expectations? For indeed, a more favourable reception

could not be hoped for. I most sincerely wish you joy of your success, and have not the least doubt but it will have all the good effects upon your future fortune which you could possibly hope for, or expect. Much depended upon the first performance; that trial is now happily over, and henceforth you will sail with a favourable gale. In truth, to acquire such a flood of reputation from writing on a subject in itself so unpopular in this country, is neither a common, nor a contemptible conquest.—I will not trouble you more on a subject of which you must needs have heard a great deal from hence lately. I rejoice in your good fortune, and am with much esteem and sincerity, Dear Sir,

Your most obedient servant,  
WILL. STRAHAN.

The following Letter from Mr. Strahan's son, forms an interesting counterpart to the foregoing article.

*From ANDREW STRAHAN, Esq.  
to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

Dear Sir, London, 19th November, 1792.  
BEING at the sea-side in Sussex when I received your favour of the 26th ult. I have had no opportunity till now of acknowledging it, and

and at the same time informing myself of the state of the Edition, so as to answer your question.

Mr. Cadell (who is now with me, and who desires to be affectionately remembered) is of opinion with me, that we should take the ensuing season of ships failing to India to reduce the quartos.—But we will print an edition in octavo, next summer, whatever may then be the state of the former, and we will thank you for a correct copy at your leisure.

The fourteenth Edition of your "*Scotland*" will be published in the course of the winter, during which it is our intention to advertise all your works strongly in all the papers.—And we have the satisfaction of informing you, that if we may judge by the sale of your writings, your literary reputation is daily increasing.

I am, with much esteem, &c.

## NOTE C. p. 35.

The praise contained in the following letter, (though less profusely bestowed than by some other of Dr. Robertson's correspondents,) will not appear of small value to those who are acquainted with the character of the writer, and with his accurate researches into the antiquities of Scotland.

*From Sir DAVID DALRYMPLE  
to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

Dear Sir, Edinburgh, 20th Feb. 1776.

I AM very happy in your favourable acceptance of the Annals of Scotland. Even your opinion is not enough to make me think of going beyond the Restoration of James I. Your Sketch of the History from that time to the death of James V. is of itself sufficient to deter me. It is very possible that in your delineation of the history of the five Jameses, there may be errors and omissions, but you have drawn all the characters with such historical truth, that if I were to work on the same ground, I might spoil and over-charge the canvas; at the same time, the reader would not see himself in a strange country—every object would be familiar to him.

Q

There

There is another reason, and that is a political one, for my stopping short. Many readers might take it for granted that I would write disfavourably of the Stewarts, from prejudice of education or family. Other readers might suspect my impartiality, and thus, there would be little prospect of my being favourably heard. If I have health to finish my plan, I propose to go back into the laws of Scotland. *That* is a work of which I must not lose sight, after I have laboured so long upon it \*.

I send you a book which I have re-published, and beg your acceptance of it. I am,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient  
and obliged humble servant,

DAV. DALRYMPLE.

\* It is much to be regretted that the work here alluded to by Lord Hailes was never carried into complete execution. The fragments, however, of such a writer relative to a subject on which he had so long bestowed attention, could not fail to be of great value; and it is to be hoped that they will one day be communicated to the public.

The following Letters, which have been kindly communicated to me by a friend of Lord Hailes, ascertain some important dates with respect to the progress of Dr. Robertson's studies.

Dr. ROBERTSON to Lord HAILES.

Sir, Gladsmuir, 22d Oct. 1753.

I INTEND to employ some of the idle time of this winter in making a more diligent enquiry than ever I have done into that period of Scots History from the death of King James V. to the death of Queen Mary. I have the more common histories of that time, such as Buchanan, Spottiswood, and Knox, but there are several collections of papers by Anderson, Jebb, Forbes, and others, which I know not how to come at. I am persuaded you have most of these books in your library, and I flatter myself you will be so good as to allow me the use of them. You know better what books to send me, and what will be necessary to give any light to this part of history, than I do what to ask, and therefore I leave the particular books to your own choice, which you'll please order to be given to my servant. Whatever you send me, shall be used with much care, and returned with great punctuality.—I

beg you may forgive this trouble. I am with great respect, &c.

Dr. ROBERTSON to Lord HAILES.

Sir, . . . . . Gladsmuir, 26th July, 1757.

I HAVE now got forward to the year 1660, and as it will be impossible for me to steer through Gowrie's conspiracy without your guidance, I must take advantage of the friendly offer you was pleased to make me, and apply to you for such books and papers as you think to be necessary for my purpose.—I would wish to give an accurate and rational account of the matter, but not very minute. I have in my possession Calderwood's MSS. and all the common printed histories; but I have neither Lord Cromarty's account, nor any other piece particularly relative to the conspiracy. I beg you may supply me with as many as you can, and direct me to any thing you think may be useful. The papers you are pleased to communicate to me, shall be shewn to no human creature, and no farther use shall be made of them than you permit. My servant will take great care of whatever books or papers you give him. I need not say how sensible I am of the good will with which you are pleased to instruct me in this curious point of history, nor how much I expect to profit by it. I ever am, &c.

## Dr. ROBERTSON to Lord HAILES.

Sir, Edinburgh, 8th Nov. 1758.

I HAVE taken the liberty to send you inclosed a Preface to my book, which I have just now written. I find it very difficult for a man to speak of himself with any decency through three or four pages. Unluckily I have been obliged to write it in the utmost hurry, as Strahan is clamouring for it. I think it was necessary to say all in it that I have said, and yet it looks too like a puff. I send it to you, not only that you may do me the favour to correct any inaccuracies in the composition, but because there is a paragraph in it which I would not presume to publish without your permission, though I have taken care to word it so modestly that a man might have said it of himself. As I must send off the Preface by to-morrow's post, I must beg the favour that you would return it with your remarks to-morrow morning. I would wish, if possible, that I had time to shew it to Blair. I am with great respect, &c.

The Letters which follow, (although written many years afterwards,) may, without impropriety, be introduced here, as they all relate, more or less, to the History of Scotland.

Dr. ROBERTSON *to* Lord HAILES.

My Lord, College, Feb. 10, 1776.

I HOPE your Lordship will forgive me for having deferred so long to return you my best thanks for the very acceptable present which you were pleased to send me. Previous to doing this, I wished to have the satisfaction of perusing the Annals again, and the opinion I had formed of their merit, is in no degree diminished by an attentive review of them in their present dress.

You have given authenticity and order to a period of our History, which has hitherto been destitute of both, and a Scotchman has now the pleasure of being able to pronounce what is true, and what is fabulous, in the early part of our national story. As I have no doubt with respect to the reception which this part of the Annals, though perhaps the least interesting, will meet with, I flatter myself that your Lordship will go on with the work. Allow me, on the public account, to hope that you have not fixed the

*Accession*

*Accession of James I.* as an impassable boundary beyond which you are not to advance. It is at that period, the more interesting age of our history commences. From thence the regular series of our laws begins. During the reign of the Jameses, many things still require the investigation of such an accurate and patient enquirer as your Lordship. I hope that what I have done in my review of that period, will be no restraint on your Lordship in entering upon that field. My view of it was a general one, that did not require the minute accuracy of a chronological research, and if you discover either omissions or mistakes in it, (and I dare say you will discover both,) I have no objection to your supplying the one, and correcting the other. Your strictures on me will not be made with a hostile hand, and I had much rather that these were made, than be deprived of the advantage that I shall reap from your completing your work. As far as I can judge by the opinion of those with whom I converse, the public wish is, that you should continue your Annals at least to the death of James V. I most heartily join my voice to this general desire, and wish you health to go on with what will be so much for the honour of your country. I am with great truth and respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient  
and most humble servant.

Dr. ROBERTSON to Lord HAILES.

My Lord, College, March 13th, 1776.

WHEN I took the liberty of applying to your Lordship last week, I unluckily did not advert to the hurry of business during the last week of the Session. In compliance with your request, I shall, without preamble or apology, mention what induced me to trouble your Lordship.

I am now in the twenty-eighth year of my authorship, and the proprietors of the History of Scotland purpose to end the second fourteen years of their copyright splendidly, by publishing two new editions of that Book, one in quarto, and another in octavo. This has induced me to make a general review of the whole work, and to avail myself both of the remarks of my friends, and the strictures of those who differ from me in opinion. I mean not to take the field as a controversial writer, or to state myself in opposition to any antagonist. Wherever I am satisfied that I have fallen into errors, I shall quietly, and without reluctance, correct it. Wherever I think my sentiments right and well established, they shall stand.—In some few places, I shall illustrate what I have written, by materials and facts which I have discovered since the first publication of my book. These additions will not, I hope, be very bulky, but they will

will contribute, as I imagine, to throw light on several events which have been mistaken, or misrepresented. I shall take care, on account of the purchasers of former editions, that all the additions and alterations of any importance, shall be published separately, both in quarto and octavo.

As I know how thoroughly your Lordship is acquainted with every transaction in Q. Mary's reign, and with how much accuracy you are accustomed to examine historical facts, it was my intention to have requested of you, that if any error or omission in my book had occurred to you in the perusal of it, you would be so obliging as to communicate your sentiments to me. I shall certainly receive such communications with much attention and gratitude.— You have set me right with respect to the act 19th April 1567, but I think that I can satisfy your Lordship that it was esteemed in that age, and was really a concession of greater importance to the reformed than you seem to apprehend. I beg leave to desire that, if you have any remarks to communicate, they may be sent soon, as the Booksellers are impatient. I trust your Lordship will pardon the liberty I have taken. I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your most obedient and most humble servant.

## Dr. ROBERTSON to Lord HAILES.

My Lord,

College of Edinburgh,  
March 20, 1786.

I CONSIDER it as an unfortunate accident for me, that your Lordship happened to be so much pre-occupied at the time when I took the liberty of applying to you. I return you thanks for the communication of your notes on the acts of parliament. Besides the entertainment and instruction I received from the perusal of them, I found some things of use to me, and I have availed myself of the permission you was pleased to give me.

I mentioned to your Lordship that I differed little from you about the effect of the act, April 19, 1567. I inclose a copy both of the *text*, corrected as I intend to publish it in the new edition, and of a note which I shall add to explain my idea of the import of the act. I request of your Lordship to peruse it, and if in any part it meets not with your approbation, be so good as to let me know. Please to return it as soon as you can, that I may communicate it, and any other additions and alterations, to Mr. Davidson, who has promised to revise them.

In 1776 your Lordship published the Secret Correspondence of Sir R. Cecil with James VI.

I have

I have not a copy of it, and have been unsuccessful in my application for one to some of my friends. If you have a copy, and will be so good as to allow me the use of it, I shall return it with the greatest care, as I do herewith the notes I received from your Lordship. I have attended to the notes in Bannatyne's poems. I have the Hamilton MSS. in three volumes folio. They are curious.

I have the honour to be, &c.

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I shall subjoin some extracts from Mr. Hume's letters to Dr. Robertson, written about this period, and a few other passages from different correspondents. They seem to me worthy of preservation, although the extraneous matter they contain rendered it impossible for me to incorporate them with my Narrative.

Mr. HUME to Dr. ROBERTSON.

My dear Sir,

London, Lisle Street,  
18th Nov. 1758.

ACCORDING to your permission I have always got your corrected sheets from Strahan; and am glad to find, that we shall agree in almost all the material parts of our History. Your refo-

resolution to assert the authenticity of Mary's letter to Bothwell, with the consequence which must necessarily follow, removes the chief point, in which, I apprehend, we should differ. There remain however two other points where I have not the good fortune to agree with you, *viz.* The violation of the treaty of Perth by Mary of Guise, and the innocence of Mary with regard to Babington's conspiracy : but as I had written notes upon these passages, the public must judge between us. Only allow me to say, that even if you be in the right with regard to the last, (of which, notwithstanding my deference to your authority, I cannot perceive the least appearance,) you are certainly too short and abrupt in handling it. I believe you go contrary to received opinion ; and the point was of consequence enough to merit a note or a dissertation.

There is still another point in which we differ, and which reduced me to great perplexity. You told me, that all historians had been mistaken with regard to James's behaviour on his mother's trial and execution ; that he was not really the pious son he pretended to be ; that the appearances which deceived the world, were put on at the solicitation of the French Ambassador, Courcelles ; and that I should find all this proved by a manuscript of Dr. Campbell's. I accordingly spoke of the matter to Dr. Campbell, who

who confirmed what you said, with many additions and amplifications. I desired to have the manuscript, which he sent me. But great was my surprize, when I found the contrary in every page, many praises bestowed on the King's piety both by Courcelles and the French Court; his real grief and resentment painted in the strongest colours; resolutions even taken by him to form an alliance with Philip of Spain, in order to get revenge; repeated advices given him by Courcelles and the French Ministers, rather to conceal his resentment, till a proper opportunity offered of taking vengeance. What most displeased me in this affair was, that as I thought myself obliged to follow the ordinary tenor of the printed historian, while you appealed to manuscript, it would be necessary for me to appeal to the same manuscripts, to give extracts of them, and to oppose your conclusions. Though I know that I could execute this matter in a friendly and obliging manner for you, yet I own that I was very uneasy at finding myself under a necessity of observing any thing which might appear a mistake in your narration. But there came to me a man this morning, who, as I fancied, gave me the key of the difficulty, but without freeing me from my perplexity. This was a man commonly employed by Millar and Strahan to decypher manuscripts. He brought

brought me a letter of yours to Strahan, where you desired him to apply to me in order to point out the passages proper to be inserted in your Appendix, and proper to prove the assertion of your text. You add there, these letters are in the French language. I immediately concluded that you had not read the manuscripts, but had taken it on Mr. Campbell's word : for the letters are in English, translated by I know not whom from the French. I could do nothing on this occasion but desire Strahan to stop the press in printing the Appendix, and stay till I wrote to you. If I could persuade you to change the narration of the text, that sheet could be easily cancelled, and an appendix formed proper to confirm an opposite account. If you still persist in your opinion, somebody else whom you trusted, might be employed to find the proper passages ; for I cannot find them.

There is only one passage which looks like your opinion, and which I shall transcribe to you. It is a relation of what passed between James and Courcelles upon the first rumour of the discovery of Babington's conspiracy, before James apprehended his mother to be in any danger. " The  
" King said he loved his mother as much as na-  
" ture and duty bound him ; but he could not  
" love her : For he knew well  
" she bore him no more good-will than she did  
" to

“ to the Queen of England: That he had seen  
“ with his own eyes, before Foulnaye’s depa-  
“ ture out of Scotland, a letter to him, whereby  
“ she sent him word, that if he would not con-  
“ form himself to her will, and follow her coun-  
“ sels and advice, that he should content himself  
“ with the lordship of Darnley, which was all  
“ that appertained unto him by his father:  
“ Farther, that he had seen other letters under  
“ her own hand, confirming her evil towards  
“ him: Besides, that she had oftentimes gone  
“ about to make a regency in Scotland, and to  
“ put him besides the Crown; that it behoved  
“ him to think of his own affairs, and that he  
“ thought the Queen of England would attempt  
“ nothing against her person without making  
“ him acquainted: That his mother was hence-  
“ forward to carry herself both towards him and  
“ the Queen of England after another sort,  
“ without bending any more upon such practices  
“ and intelligences as she had in former times:  
“ That he hoped to set such persons about her  
“ as” (Here the manuscript is not farther legible.)  
But though such were James’s sentiments before  
he apprehended his mother to be in danger, he  
adopted a directly opposite conduct afterwards,  
as I told you. I can only express my wishes that  
you may see reason to conform your narrative in

vol. ii. p. 139, 140. to this account, or omit that Appendix altogether, or find some other person who can better execute your intentions than it is possible for me to do.

Mr. HUME *to* Dr. ROBERTSON.

My dear Sir, 25th January, 1759.

WHAT I wrote you with regard to Mary's concurrence in the conspiracy against Queen Elizabeth, was from the printed histories of papers ; and nothing ever appeared to me more evident. Your chief objection, I see, is derived from one circumstance, that neither the secretaries nor conspirators were confronted with Mary ; but you must consider that the law did not then require this confrontation, and it was in no case the practice. The Crown could not well grant it in one case without granting it in all, because the refusing of it would then have been a strong presumption of innocence in the prisoner. Yet as Mary's was an extraordinary case, Elizabeth was willing to have granted it. I find in Forbes's MS. papers, sent me by Lord Royston, a letter of hers to Burleigh and Walsingham, wherein she tells them, that, if they thought proper, they might carry down the two secretaries to Fotheringay, in order to confront them with her. But they reply, that they think it needless.

But I am now sorry to tell you, that by Murden's State Papers, which are printed, the matter is put beyond all question. I got these papers during the holidays by Dr. Birch's means ; and as soon as I had read them, I ran to Millar, and desired him very earnestly to stop the publication of your History till I should write to you, and give you an opportunity of correcting a mistake of so great moment ; but he absolutely refused compliance. He said that your book was now finished, that the copies would be shipped for Scotland in two days, that the whole narration of Mary's trial must be wrote over again ; that this would require time, and it was uncertain whether the new narrative could be brought within the same compass with the old ; that this change, he said, would require the cancelling a great many sheets ; that there were scattered passages through the volumes founded on your theory, and these must also be all cancelled, and that this change required the new printing of a great part of the edition. For these reasons, which do not want force, he refused, after deliberation, to stop his publication, and I was obliged to acquiesce. Your best apology at present is, that you could not possibly see the grounds of Mary's guilt, and every equitable person will excuse you.

I am sorry, on many accounts, that you did not see this Collection of Murden's. Among other curiosities, there are several instructions to H. Killigrew, dated 10th Sept. 1572. He was then sent into Scotland. It there appears, that the Regents, Murray and Lennox, had desired Mary to be put into their hands, in order to try her and put her to death. Elizabeth there offers to Regent Mar to deliver her up, provided good security were given, " that she should receive " that she hath deserved there by order of " Justice, whereby no further peril should ensue " by her escaping, or by setting her up again." It is probable, Mar refused compliance, for no steps were taken towards it.

I am nearly printed out, and shall be sure to send you a copy by the stage-coach, or some other conveyance. I beg of you to make remarks as you go along. It would have been much better had we communicated before printing, which was always my desire, and was most suitable to the friendship which always did, and I hope always will, subsist between us. I speak this chiefly on my own account. For though I had the perusal of your sheets before I printed, I was not able to derive sufficient benefits from them, or indeed to make any alteration by their assistance. There still remain, I fear, many errors,

errors, of which you could have convinced me, if we had canvassed the matter in conversation. Perhaps I might also have been sometimes no less fortunate with you. Particularly I could almost undertake to convince you, that the Earl of Murray's conduct with the Duke of Norfolk was no way dishonourable.

I have seen a copy of your History with Charles Stanhope. Lord Willoughby, who had been there reading some passages of it, said, that you was certainly mistaken with regard to the act passed in the last parliament of Mary, settling the Reformation. He said that the act of parliament the first of James was no proof of it: for though that statute contains a statute where the Queen's name was employed, yet that is always the case with the bills brought into parliament, even though they receive not the Royal Assent, nor perhaps pass the Houses. I wish this be not the case, considering the testimony of Buchanan, Calderwood, and Spotswood, Besides, if the bill had before received the Royal Assent, what necessity of repeating it, or passing it again? Mary's title was more undisputable than James's.

Dr. Blair tells me, that Prince Edward is reading you, and is charmed. I hear the same of the Princess and Prince of Wales. But what will really give you pleasure, I lent my copy to

Elliot during the holidays, who thinks it one of the finest performances he ever read; and though he expected much, he finds more. He remarked, however, (which is also my opinion,) that in the beginning, before your pen was sufficiently accustomed to the historic style, you employ too many digressions and reflections. This was also somewhat my own case, which I have corrected in my new edition.

Millar was proposing to publish me about the middle of March, but I shall communicate to him your desire, even though I think it entirely groundless, as you will likewise think after you have read my volume. He has very needlessly delayed your publication till the first of February, at the desire of the Edinburgh booksellers, who could no way be affected by a publication in London. I was exceedingly sorry not to be able to comply with your desire, when you expressed your wish, that I should not write this period. I could not write downward. For when you find occasion, by new discoveries, to correct your opinion with regard to facts which passed in Queen Elizabeth's days; who, that has not the best opportunities of informing himself, could venture to relate any recent transactions? I must therefore have abandoned altogether this scheme of the English History, in which I had proceeded

proceeded so far, if I had not acted as I did. You will see what light and force this History of the Tudors bestows on that of the Stewarts. Had I been prudent, I should have begun with it. I care not to boast, but I will venture to say, that I have now effectually stopped the mouths of all those villainous Whigs who railed at me.

You are so kind as to ask me about my coming down. I can yet answer nothing. I have the strongest reluctance to change places. I lived several years happy with my brother at Nine-wells, and had not his marriage changed a little the state of the family, I believe I should have lived and died there. I used every expedient to evade this journey to London, yet it is now uncertain whether I shall ever leave it. I have had some invitations, and some intentions of taking a trip to Paris; but I believe it will be safer for me not to go thither, for I might probably settle there for life. No one was ever endowed with so great a portion of the *vis inertiae*. But as I live here very privately, and avoid as much as possible (and it is easily possible) all connexions with the Great, I believe I should be better at Edinburgh.

\* \* \*

Mr. HUME to Dr. ROBERTSON.

London, 8th Feb. 1759.

\* \* \* AS to the *Age of Leo the Tenth*, it was Warton himself who intended to write it; but he has not wrote it, and probably never will. If I understand your hint, I should conjecture, that you had some thoughts of taking up the subject. But how can you acquire knowledge of the great works of Sculpture, Architecture, and Painting, by which that age was chiefly distinguished? Are you versed in all the anecdotes of the Italian Literature? These questions I heard proposed in a company of Literati when I enquired concerning this design of Warton. They applied their remarks to that gentleman, who yet, they say, has travelled. I wish they do not all of them fall more fully on you. However, you must not be idle. May I venture to suggest to you the Ancient History, particularly that of Greece? I think Rollin's success might encourage you, nor need you be in the least intimidated by his merit. That author has no other merit but a certain facility and sweetnes of narration; but has loaded his work with fifty puerilities.

Our

Our friend, Wedderburn, is advancing with great strides in his Profession. \* \* \*

I desire my compliments to Lord Elibank. I hope his Lordship has forgot his vow of answering us, and of washing Queen Mary white. I am afraid that is impossible; but his Lordship is very well qualified to gild her.

I am, &c.

Mr. HUME to Dr. ROBERTSON.

\* \* \* \* \*

I forgot to tell you, that two days ago I was in the House of Commons, where an English gentleman came to me, and told me, that he had lately sent to a grocer's shop for a pound of raisins, which he received wrapt up in a paper that he shewed me. How would you have turned pale at the sight! It was a leaf of your History, and the very character of Queen Elizabeth, which you had laboured so finely, little thinking it would so soon come to so disgraceful an end.—I happened a little after to see Millar, and told him the story; consulting him, to be sure, on the fate of his new boasted Historian, of whom he was so fond. But the story proves

more serious than I apprehended. For he told Strahan, who thence suspects villany among his apprentices and journeymen; and has sent me very earnestly to know the gentleman's name, that he may find out the grocer, and trace the matter to the bottom. In vain did I remonstrate that this was sooner or later the fate of all Authors, *serius, ocyus, sors exitura*. He will not be satisfied; and begs me to keep my jokes for another occasion. But that I am resolved not to do; and therefore, being repulsed by his passion and seriousness, I direct them against you.

Next week, I am published; and then, I expect a constant comparison will be made between Dr. Robertson and Mr. Hume. I shall tell you in a few weeks which of these Heroes is likely to prevail. Meanwhile, I can inform both of them for their comforts, that their combat is not likely to make half so much noise as that between Broughton and the one-eyed coachman. *Vanitas vanitatum, atque omnia vanitas*. I shall still except, however, the friendship and good opinion of worthy men.

I am, &c.

## Mr. HUME to Dr. ROBERTSON.

My Dear Sir,      London, 12th March, 1759.

I BELIEVE I mentioned to you, a French Gentleman, Monsieur Helvetius, whose book, *De l'Esprit*, was making a great noise in Europe. He is a very fine genius, and has the character of a very worthy man. My name is mentioned several times in his work with marks of esteem; and he has made me an offer, if I would translate his work into English, to translate a-new all my philosophical writings into French. He says, that none of them are well done, except that on the Natural History of Religion, by Monsieur Matigny, a Counsellor of State. He added, that the Abbé Prevot, celebrated for the *Mémoires d'un Homme d'Honneur*, and other entertaining books, was just now translating my History. This account of Helvetius engaged me to send him over the new editions of all my writings; and I have added your History, which, I told him, was here published with great applause; adding, that the subject was interesting and the execution masterly; and that it was probable some man of letters at Paris may think that a translation of it would be agreeable to the

the public. I thought that this was the best method of executing your intentions. I could not expect that any Frenchman here would be equal to the work. There is one Carracioli, who came to me and spoke of translating my new volume of History; but as he also mentioned his intentions of translating Smollet, I gave him no encouragement to proceed. The same reason would make me averse to see you in his hands.

But though I have given this character of your work to Monsieur Helvetius, I warn you, that this is the last time, that, either to Frenchman or Englishman, I shall ever speak the least good of it. A plague take you! Here I sat near the historical summit of Parnassus, immediately under Dr. Smollet; and you have the impudence to squeeze yourself by me, and place yourself directly under his feet. Do you imagine that this can be agreeable to me? And must not I be guilty of great simplicity to contribute by my endeavours to your thrusting me out of my place in Paris as well as at London? But I give you warning that you will find the matter somewhat difficult, at least in the former city. A friend of mine, who is there, writes home to his father, the strangest accounts on that head; which my modesty will not permit me

me to repeat, but which it allowed me very deliciously to swallow.

I have got a good reason or pretence for excusing me to Monsieur Helvetius with regard to the translating his work. A translation of it was previously advertised here. I remain, &c.

Mr. HUME to Dr. ROBERTSON.

I HAD a letter from Helvetius lately, wrote before your book arrived at Paris. He tells me, that the Abbé Prevot, who had just finished the translation of my History, *paroit très-disposé à traduire l'Histoire d'Ecosse que vient de faire Monsieur Robertson.* If he be engaged by my persuasion, I shall have the satisfaction of doing you a real credit and pleasure: for he is one of the best pens in Paris.

I looked with great impatience in your new edition for the note you seemed to intend with regard to the breach of the capitulation of Perth ; and was much disappointed at missing it. I own that I am very curious on that head. I cannot so much as imagine a colour upon which their accusations could possibly be founded. The articles were only two ; indemnity to the inhabitants,

bitants, and the exclusion of French soldiers—now that Scotch national troops were not Frenchmen and foreigners seems pretty apparent: and both Knox and the manifesto of the Congregation acquit the Queen-Regent of any breach of the first article, as I had observed in my note to page 422. This makes me suspect that some facts have escaped me; and I beg you to indulge my curiosity by informing me of them.

\*       \*       \*       \*

Our friend Smith † is very successful here, and Gerard ‡ is very well received. The Epi-goniad I cannot so much promise for, though I have done all in my power to forward it, particularly by writing a letter to the Critical Review, which you may peruse. I find, however, some good judges profess a great esteem for it, but *habent et sua fata libelli*: however, if you want a little flattery to the author, (which I own is very refreshing to an author,) you may tell him that Lord Chesterfield said to me he was a great Poet. I imagine that Wilkie will be very much elevated by praise from an English Earl, and a Knight of the Garter, and an Ambassador, and a Secretary

† Theory of Moral Sentiments.

‡ Essay on Taste.

of

of State, and a man of so great reputation. For I observe that the greatest rustics are commonly most affected with such circumstances.

Ferguson's book † has a great deal of genius and fine writing, and will appear in time. \*

\* \* \* \* \*

From Dr. BIRCH to Dr. ROBERTSON.

Dear Sir, London, Feb. 8th, 1759.

I HAVE just read over the second volume of your excellent History; and the satisfaction which I have received from the perusal of it, and the gratitude which I owe you for the honour done me in it, as well as for so valuable a present, will not permit me to lose one post in returning you my sincerest acknowledgments. My Lord Royston likewise desires me to transmit to you his thanks and compliments in the strongest terms.

Though your work has been scarce a fortnight in the hands of the public, I can already inform you, upon the authority of the best judges, that the spirit and elegance of the composition, and the candour, moderation, and

#### † Essay on the History of Civil Society.

humanity, which run through it, will secure you the general approbation both of the present age and posterity, and raise the character of our country in a species of writing, in which of all others it has been most defective.

If the second volume of the State Papers of Lord Burghley, published since Christmas here, had appeared before your History had been finished, it would have furnished you with reasons for entertaining a less favourable opinion of Mary Queen of Scots in one or two points, than you seem at present possessed of. The principal is with regard to her last intrigues and correspondences which were the immediate cause of her death. And I could wish you had likewise seen a manuscript account of her trial in Lord Royston's possession. This account is much fuller than Camden's, whose History is justly to be suspected in every thing relating to her; or than any other, that has yet seen the light. It contains so ample a state of the evidence produced of her guilt, as, I think, leaves no doubt of it; notwithstanding that the witnesses were not confronted with her; a manner of proceeding, which, though certainly due to every person accused, was not usual either before her time or long after.

You

You conclude in the Note, vol. i. p. 307, in favour of her innocence from any criminal intrigue with Rizzio, from the silence of Randolph on that head. But I apprehend, that in opposition to this allegation you may be urged with the joint letter of that gentleman and the Earl of Bedford of 27th March 1566, in your Appendix, No. xv. p. 22.

I desire you to make my compliments acceptable to Sir David Dalrymple and Mr. Davidson, and believe me to be, &c.

THOMAS BIRCH.

*From Sir GILBERT ELLIOT to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

Dear Sir,      Admiralty, January 20th, 1759.

MILLAR has just sent me the History of Scotland. I cannot imagine why he should delay the publication so long as the first of February, for I well know that the printing has been completed a great while. You could have sent me no present, which on its own account I should have esteemed so much; but you have greatly enhanced its value, by allowing me to accept

accept it as a memorial and testimony of a friendship which I have long cultivated with equal satisfaction and sincerity. I am no stranger to your book, though your copy is but just put into my hands : David Hume so far indulged my impatience, as to allow me to carry to the country during the holydays, the loose sheets, which he happened to have by him. In that condition I read it quite through with the greatest satisfaction, and in much less time than I ever employed on any portion of history of the same length. I had certainly neither leisure nor inclination to exercise the function of a Critic ; carried along with the stream of the narration, I only felt, when I came to the conclusion, that you had greatly exceeded the expectations I had formed, though I do assure you these were not a little sanguine. If, upon a more deliberate perusal, I discover any blemish, I shall point it out without any scruple : at present, it seems to me that you have rendered the period you treat of as interesting as any part of our British story ; the views you open of policy, manners, and religion, are ingenious, solid, and deep. Your work will certainly be ranked in the highest historical class ; and for my own part, I think it besides, a composition

of

of uncommon genius and eloquence.—I was afraid you might have been interrupted by the Reformation, but I find it much otherwise ; you treat it with great propriety, and, in my opinion, with sufficient freedom. No revolution, whether civil or religious, can be accomplished without that degree of ardour and passion, which, in a later age, will be matter of ridicule to men who do not feel the occasion, and enter into the spirit of the times. But I must not get into dissertations ;—I hope you will ever believe me, with great regard,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient and faithful Servant,

GILB. ELLIOT.

NOTE D. p. 86.

*From BARON D'HOLBACH to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

Sir, Paris, the 30th of May 1768.

I RECEIVED but a few days ago the favour of your letter, sent to me by Mr. Andrew Stuart ; I am very proud of being instrumental in contributing to the translation of the valuable work you are going to publish. The excellent work you have published already is a sure sign of the

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reception

reception your History of Charles V. will meet with in the Continent ; such an interesting subject deserves undoubtedly the attention of all Europe. You are very much in the right of being afraid of the hackney translators of Holland and Paris ; accordingly I thought it my duty to find out an able hand capable of answering your desire. M. Suard, a gentleman well known for his style in French, and his knowledge in the English language, has, at my request, undertaken the translation of your valuable book ; I know nobody in this country capable of performing better such a grand design. Consequently the best way will be for your bookseller, as soon as he publishes one sheet, to send it immediately à Monsieur M. Suard, Directeur de la Gazette de France, rue St. Roch à Paris. By means of this the sheets of your book will be translated as soon as they come from the press, provided the bookseller of London is very strict in not shewing the same favour to any other man upon the Continent.

I have the honour to be,

With great consideration,

Sir,

Your most obedient and humble Servant,

D'HOLBACH.

## NOTE E. p. 100.

THE following Letters have no immediate connection with the history of Dr. Robertson's Life, but, I trust, that no apology is necessary for their insertion here.

*From Mr. HUME to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

Dear Robertson, Paris, 1st December, 1763.

AMONG other agreeable circumstances, which attend me at Paris, I must mention that of having a Lady for a translator, a woman of merit, the widow of an advocate. She was before very poor, and known but to few; but this work has got her reputation, and procured her a pension from the Court, which sets her at her ease. She tells me, that she has got a habit of industry; and would continue, if I could point out to her any other English book she could undertake, without running the risque of being anticipated by any other translator. Your History of Scotland is translated, and is in the press: but I recommended to her your History of Charles V. and promised to write to

you, in order to know when it would be printed, and to desire you to send over the sheets from London as they came from the press; I should put them into her hands, and she would by that means have the start of every other translator. My two volumes last published are at present in the press. She has a very easy natural style: sometimes she mistakes the sense; but I now correct her manuscript; and should be happy to render you the same service, if my leisure permit me, as I hope it will. Do you ask me about my course of life? I can only say, that I eat nothing but ambrosia, drink nothing but nectar, breathe nothing but incense, and tread on nothing but flowers. Every man I meet, and still more every lady, would think they were wanting in the most indispensable duty, if they did not make to me a long and elaborate harangue in my praise. What happened last week, when I had the honour of being presented to the D——n's children at Versailles, is one of the most curious scenes I have yet passed through. The Duc de B. the eldest, a boy of ten years old, stepped forth, and told me how many friends and admirers I had in this country, and that he reckoned himself in the number, from the pleasure he had received from the reading

reading of many passages in my works. When he had finished, his brother, the Count de P. who is two years younger, began his discourse, and informed me, that I had been long and impatiently expected in France; and that he himself expected soon to have great satisfaction from the reading of my fine History. But what is more curious; when I was carried thence to the Count d'A. who is but four years of age, I heard him mumble something, which, though he had forgot it in the way, I conjectured from some scattered words, to have been also a panegyric dictated to him. Nothing could more surprise my friends, the Parisian Philosophers, than this incident.

\* \* \*

\* \* \* It is conjectured that this honour was payed me by express order from the D. who, indeed, is not, on any occasion, sparing in my praise.

All this attention and panegyric was at first oppressive to me; but now it fits more easy. I have recovered, in some measure, the use of the language, and am falling into friendships, which are very agreeable; much more so than silly, distant admiration. They now begin to banter me, and tell droll stories of me, which

they have either observed themselves, or have heard from others; so that you see I am beginning to be at home. It is probable, that this place will be long my home. I feel little inclination to the factious barbarians of London; and have ever desired to remain in the place where I am planted. How much more so, when it is the best place in the world? I could here live in great abundance on the half of my income; for there is no place where money is so little requisite to a man who is distinguished either by his birth or by personal qualities. I could run out, you see, in a panegyric on the people; but you would suspect, that this was a mutual convention between us. However, I cannot forbear observing, on what a different footing learning and the learned are here, from what they are among the factious barbarians above mentioned.

I have here met with a prodigious historical curiosity, the Memoirs of King James II. in fourteen volumes, all wrote with his own hand, and kept in the Scots College. I have looked into it, and have made great discoveries. It will be all communicated to me; and I have had an offer of access to the Secretary of State's office; if I want to know the dispatches of any French

Minister

Minister that resided in London. But these matters are much out of my head. I beg of you to visit Lord Marischal, who will be pleased with your company. I have little paper remaining and less time; and therefore conclude abruptly, by assuring you that I am,

Dear Doctor,

Yours sincerely,

DAVID HUME.

*From Mr. HUME to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

My dear Sir, London, 19th March, 1767.  
YOU do extremely right in applying to me wherever it is the least likely I can serve you or any of your friends. I consulted immediately with General Conway, who told me, as I suspected, that the chaplains to forts and garrisons were appointed by the War Office, and did not belong to his department. Unhappily I have but a slight acquaintance with Lord Barrington, and cannot venture to ask him any favour; but I shall call on Pryce Campbell, though not of my acquaintance, and shall enquire of him the canals through which this affair

may be conducted: perhaps it may lie in my power to facilitate it by some means or other.

I shall endeavour to find out the unhappy philosopher you mention, though it will be difficult for me to do him any service. He is an ingenious man, but unfortunate in his conduct, particularly in the early part of his life. The world is so cruel as never to overlook those flaws; and nothing but hypocrisy can fully cover them from observation. There is not so effectual a scourer of reputations in the world. I wish that I had never parted with that *Lixivium*, in case I should at any future time have occasion for it.

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \* A few days before my arrival in London, Mr. Davenport had carried to Mr. Conway a letter of Rousseau's, in which that philosopher says, that he had never meant to refuse the King's bounty, that he would be proud of accepting it, but that he would owe it entirely to his Majesty's generosity and that of his Ministers, and would refuse it if it came through any other canal whatsoever; even that of Mr. Davenport. Mr. Davenport then addressed himself to Mr. Conway, and asked whether

ther it was not possible to recover what this man's madness had thrown away? The Secretary replied, that I should be in London in a few days, and that he would take no steps in the affair but at my desire and with my approbation. When the matter was proposed to me, I exhorted the General to do this act of charity to a man of genius, however wild and extravagant. The King, when applied to, said, that since the pension had once been promised, it should be granted notwithstanding all that had passed in the interval. And thus the affair is happily finished, unless some new extravagance come across the philosopher, and engage him to reject what he has a-new applied for. If he knew my situation with General Conway he probably would: for he must then conjecture that the affair could not be done without my consent.

Ferguson's book goes on here with great success. A few days ago I saw Mrs. Montague, who had just finished it with great pleasure: I mean, she was sorry to finish it, but had read it with great pleasure. I asked her, Whether she was satisfied with the style? Whether it did not savour somewhat of the country? O yes, said she, a great deal: it seems almost impossible that any one could write such a style except a Scotzman.

I find

I find you prognosticate a very short date to my administration : I really believe that few (but not evil) will be my days. My absence will not probably allow my claret time to ripen, much less to sour. However that may be, I hope to drink out the remainder of it with you in mirth and jollity. I am sincerely yours  
*usque ad aras.*

DAVID HUME.

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In comparing the amiable qualities displayed in Mr. Hume's familiar letters, and (according to the universal testimony of his friends) exhibited in the whole tenor of his private conduct, with those passages in his metaphysical writings which strike at the root of the moral and religious principles of our nature, I have sometimes pleased myself with recollecting the ingenious argument against the theories of Epicurus, which Cicero deduces from the history of that philosopher's life. “ *Ac mihi quidem, quod et ipse vir bonus fuit, et multi Epicurei fuerunt et hodie sunt et in amicitia fideles, et in omni vita constantes et graves, nec voluptate sed officio consilia moderantes, hoc videtur major vis honestatis et minor voluptatis!* *Ita enim vivunt quidam, ut eorum vita refellatur oratio.* ”  
“ *Atque*

“ Atque ut ceteri existimantur dicere melius  
“ quam facere, sic hi mihi videntur facere melius  
“ quam dicere.”

## NOTE F. p. 130.

I have allotted this Note for some Letters from Mr. Gibbon to Dr. Robertson, which appeared to me likely to interest the public curiosity.

## Mr. GIBBON to Dr. ROBERTSON.

Bentinck Street, Nov. the 3d, 1779.

\* \* \* \* \*

WHEN I express my strong hope that you will visit London next spring, I must acknowledge that it is of the most interesting kind. Besides the pleasure which I shall enjoy in your society and conversation, I cherish the expectation of deriving much benefit from your candid and friendly criticism. The remainder of my first period of the Decline and Fall, &c. which will end with the ruin of the Western Empire, is already very far advanced; but the subject has already grown so much under my hands, that it will form a second and third volume in quarto, which will probably go to the press in the

the course of the ensuing summer.—Perhaps you have seen in the papers, that I was appointed some time ago one of the Lords of Trade; but I believe you are enough acquainted with the country to judge, that the business of my new office has not much interrupted the progress of my studies. The attendance in Parliament is indeed more laborious; I apprehend a rough session, and fear I that a black cloud is gathering in Ireland.

Be so good as to present my sincere compliments to Mr. Smith, Mr. Ferguson; and if he should still be with you, to Dr. Gillies, for whose acquaintance I esteem myself much indebted to you. I have often considered, with some sort of envy, the valuable society which you possess in so narrow a compass.

I am, Dear Sir,

With the highest regard,

Most faithfully yours,

E. GIBBON.

Mr. GIBBON to Dr. ROBERTSON.

Dear Sir, London, September 1, 1783.

YOUR candid and friendly interpretation will ascribe to business, to study, to pleasure, to constitutional

constitutional indolence, or to any other venial cause, the guilt of neglecting so valuable a correspondent as yourself. I should have thanked you for the opportunities which you have afforded me of forming an acquaintance with several men of merit who deserve your friendship, and whose character and conversation suggest a very pleasing idea of the society which you enjoy at Edinburgh.—I must at the same time lament, that the hurry of a London life has not allowed me to obtain so much as I could have wished, of their company, and must have given them an unfavourable opinion of my hospitality, unless they have weighed with indulgence the various obstacles of time and place. Mr. Stewart I had not even the pleasure of seeing; he passed through this city in his way to Paris, while I was confined with a painful fit of the gout, and in the short interval of his stay, the hours of meeting which were mutually proposed, could not be made to agree with our respective engagements. Mr. Dalzel, who is undoubtedly a modest and learned man, I have had the pleasure of seeing; but his arrival has unluckily fallen on a time of year, and a particular year, in which I have been very little in town. I should rejoice if I could repay these losses by a visit to Edinburgh,

burgh, a more tranquil scene, to which yourself, and our friend Mr. Adam Smith, would powerfully attract me. But this project, which, in a leisure hour has often amused my fancy, must now be resigned, or must be postponed at least to a very distant period. In a very few days, (before I could receive the favour of an answer,) I shall begin my journey to Lausanne in Switzerland, where I shall fix my residence, in a delightful situation, with a dear and excellent friend of that country; still mindful of my British friends, but renouncing, without reluctance, the tumult of parliament, the hopes and fears, the prejudices and passions of political life, to which my nature has always been averse. Our noble friend Lord Loughborough has endeavoured to divert me from this resolution; he rises every day in dignity and reputation, and if the means of patronage had not been so strangely reduced by our modern reformers, I am persuaded his constant and liberal kindness would more than satisfy the moderate desires of a philosopher. What I cannot hope for from the favour of Ministers, I must patiently expect from the course of nature; and this exile, which I do not view in a very gloomy light, will be terminated in due time, by the deaths of aged ladies,

ladies, whose inheritance will place me in an easy and even affluent situation. But these particulars are only designed for the ear of friendship.

I have already dispatched to Lausanne, two immense cases of books, the tools of my historical manufacture; others I shall find on the spot, and that country is not destitute of public and private libraries, which will be freely opened for the use of a man of letters. The tranquil leisure which I shall enjoy, will be partly employed in the prosecution of my history; but although my diligence will be quickened by the prospect of returning to England, to publish the last volumes (three, I am afraid) of this laborious work, yet I shall proceed with cautious steps to compose and to correct, and the dryness of my undertaking will be relieved by mixture of more elegant and classical studies, more especially of the Greek authors. Such good company will, I am sure, be pleasant to the Historian, and I am inclined to believe that it will be beneficial to the work itself. I have been lately much flattered with the praise of Dr. Blair, and a censure of the Abbé de Mably; both of them are precisely the men from whom I could wish to obtain praise and censure,

cenfure, and both these gratifications I have the pleasure of sharing with yourself. The Abbé appears to hate, and affects to despise, every writer of his own times, who has been well received by the public; and Dr. Blair, who is a master in one species of composition, has displayed, on every subject, the warmest feeling, and the most accurate judgment.—I will frankly own that my pride is elated, as often as I find myself ranked in the triumvirate of British Historians of the present age, and though I feel myself the Lepidus, I contemplate with pleasure the superiority of my colleagues. Will you be so good as to assure Dr. A. Smith of my regard and attachment. I consider myself as writing to both, and will not fix him for a separate answer. My direction is, A Monsieur Monsieur Gibbon à Lausanne en Suisse. I shall often plume myself on the friendship of Dr. Robertson, but must I tell foreigners, that while the meaner heroes fight, Achilles has retired from the war? I am,

My Dear Sir,

Most affectionately yours,

E. GIBBON.

From Mr. GIEBON to Dr. ROBERTSON.

Dear Sir, Lord Sheffield's, Downing Street,  
March 26, 1788.

AN error in your direction (to Wimpole Street, where I never had an house) delayed some time the delivery of your very obliging letter, but that delay is not sufficient to excuse me for not taking an earlier notice of it. Perhaps the number of minute but indispensable cares that seem to multiply before the hour of publication, may prove a better apology, especially with a friend who has himself passed through the same labours to the same consummation. The important day is now fixed to the eighth of May, and it was chosen by Cadell, as it coincides with the end of the fifty-first year of the Author's age. That honest and liberal Bookseller has invited me to celebrate the double festival, by a dinner at his house.—Some of our common friends will be present, but we shall all lament your absence, and that of Dr. Adam Smith (whose health and welfare will always be most interesting to me); and it gives me real concern that the time of your visits to the metropolis, has not agreed with my transient residence in my native country. I am grateful for the op-

T portunity

portunity with which you furnish me of again perusing your works in their most improved state; and I have desired Cadell to dispatch, for the use of my two Edinburgh friends, two copies of the last three volumes of my History. Whatever may be the inconstancy of taste or fashion, a rational lover of fame may be satisfied if he deserves and obtains your approbation. The praise which has ever been the most flattering to my car is, to find my name associated with the names of Robertson and Hume; and provided I can maintain my place in the triumvirate, I am indifferent at what distance I am ranked below my companions and masters.

With regard to my present work, I am inclined to believe, that it surpasses in variety and entertainment at least the second and third volumes. A long and eventful period is compressed into a smaller space, and the new barbarians who now assault and subvert the Roman Empire, enjoy the advantage of speaking their own language, and relating their own exploits.

After the publication of these last volumes, which extend to the siege of Constantinople, and comprise the ruins of Ancient Rome, I shall retire (in about two months) to Lausanne, and my friends will be pleased to hear that I enjoy in that retreat, as much repose, and even

happiness, as is consistent, perhaps, with the human condition. At proper intervals, I hope to repeat my visits to England, but no change of circumstance or situation will probably tempt me to desert my Swiss residence, which unites almost every advantage that riches can give, or fancy desire. With regard to my future literary plans, I can add nothing to what you will soon read in my Preface. But an hour's conversation with you, would allow me to explain some visionary designs which sometimes float in my mind; and, if I should ever form any serious resolution of labours, I would previously, though by the imperfect mode of a letter, consult you on the propriety and merit of any new undertakings. I am, with great regard,

Dear Sir,

Most faithfully yours,

E. GIBBON.

NOTE G. p. 137.

As Dr. Robertson received particular satisfaction from the approbation of the gentleman whose geographical researches suggested the first idea of this Disquisition, I flatter myself that no apology is necessary for the liberty I take in quoting a short Extract from one of his letters.

*From Major RENNELL to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

London, 2d July, 1791.

\* \* \* \* \* After reading your Book twice, I may with truth say, that I was never more instructed or amused than by the perusal of it; for although a great part of its subject had long been revolving in my mind, yet I had not been able to concentrate the matter in the manner you have done, or to make the different parts bear on each other.

The subject of the Appendix was what interested the public greatly; and was only to be acquired (if at all) by the study or perusal of a great number of different tracts; a task not to be accomplished by ordinary readers.

It gives me unfeigned pleasure to have been the instrument of suggesting such a task to you; and I shall reflect with pleasure, during my life, that I shall travel down to posterity with you; you, in your place, in the *great road* of History; whilst I keep the *side-path* of Geography. Since I understood the subject, I have ever thought, that the best historian is the best geographer; and if historians would direct a proper person, skilled in the principles of geography, to *embody* (as I may say) their ideas for them, the historian

historian would find himself better served, than by relying on those who may properly be styled *map-makers*. For after all, whence does the geographer derive his materials but from the labours of the historian? \* \* \*

NOTE H. p. 156.

SINCE these remarks on Dr. Robertson's style were written, I have met with some critical reflections on the same subject by Mr. Burke, too honourable for Dr. Robertson to be suppressed in this publication, although, in some particulars, they do not coincide with the opinion I have presumed to state †.

“ There is a style,” (says Mr. Burke, in a letter addressed to Mr. Murphy on his Translation of Tacitus,) “ which daily gains ground amongst us, which I should be sorry to see further advanced by a writer of your just reputation. The tendency of the mode to which I allude is, to establish two very different idioms amongst us, and to introduce

† It is proper for me to mention, that I have no authority for the authenticity of the following passage but that of a London newspaper, in which it appeared some years ago. I do not find, however, that it has been ever called in question.

“ a marked distinction between the English that  
“ is written and the English that is spoken.  
“ This practice, if grown a little more general,  
“ would confirm this distemper, such I must  
“ think it, in our language, and perhaps ren-  
“ der it incurable.

“ From this feigned manner of *falso*, as I  
“ think the musicians call something of the same  
“ sort in singing, no one modern Historian,  
“ Robertson only excepted, is perfectly free. It  
“ is assumed, I know, to give dignity and variety  
“ to the style. But whatever success the attempt  
“ may sometimes have, it is always obtained at  
“ the expence of purity, and of the graces that  
“ are natural and appropriate to our language.  
“ It is true that when the exigence calls for  
“ auxiliaries of all sorts, and common language  
“ becomes unequal to the demands of extraor-  
“ dinary thoughts, something ought to be con-  
“ ceded to the necessities which make ‘ambition  
“ virtue.’ But the allowances to necessities  
“ ought not to grow into a practice. Those  
“ portents and prodigies ought not to grow too  
“ common. If you have, here and there (much  
“ more rarely, however, than others of great  
“ and not unmerited fame) fallen into an error,  
“ which is not that of the dull or careless, you  
“ have an Author who is himself guilty, in his  
“ own

“ own tongue, of the same fault, in a very high  
“ degree. No author thinks more deeply, or  
“ paints more strongly; but he seldom or ever  
“ expresses himself naturally. It is plain, that  
“ comparing him with Plautus and Terence, or  
“ the beautiful fragments of Publius Syrus, he  
“ did not write the language of good conversa-  
“ tion. Cicero is much nearer to it. Tacitus,  
“ and the writers of his time, have fallen into  
“ that vice, by aiming at a poetical style. It  
“ is true, that eloquence in both modes of  
“ rhetorick is fundamentally the same; but the  
“ manner of handling it is totally different, even  
“ where words and phrases may be transferred  
“ from the one of these departments of writing  
“ to the other.”

For this encomium on Dr. Robertson's style when considered in contrast with that of Mr. Gibbon, (to whom it is probable that Mr. Burke's strictures more particularly refer,) there is unquestionably a very solid foundation; but in estimating the merits of the former as an English Writer, I must acknowledge that I should never have thought of singling out among his characteristical excellences, an approach to the language of good conversation. It is indeed surprising, when we attend to the elevation of that tone which he uniformly sustains, how very

seldom his turn of expression can be censured as unnatural or affected. The graces of his composition, however, although great and various, are by no means those which are *appropriate to our language*; and, in fact, he knew too well the extent and the limits of his own powers to attempt them. Accordingly he has aimed at perfections of a still higher order, the effect of which is scarcely diminished; when we contemplate them through the medium of a foreign translation.

Lord Chesterfield's judgment with respect to Dr. Robertson, while it is equally flattering with that of Mr. Burke, appears to me more precise and just. “There is a History lately come out, “of the reign of Mary Queen of Scots and her “son King James, written by one Robertson a “Scotchnian, which for *clearness, purity, and dignity*, I will not scruple to compare with the “best Historians extant, not excepting Davila, “Guicciardini, and perhaps Livy.”

May I be permitted to remark, that in the opposite extreme to that fault which Mr. Burke has here so justly censured, there is another originating in too close an adherence to what he recommends as the model of good writing, the ease and familiarity of colloquial discourse. In the productions of his more advanced years, he has occasionally fallen into it himself, and has

has sanctioned it by his example, in the numerous herd of his imitators, who are incapable of atoning for it, by copying the exquisite and inimitable beauties which abound in his compositions. For my own part, I can much more easily reconcile myself, in a grave and dignified argument, to the *dulcia vitia* of Tacitus and of Gibbon, than to that affectation of *cant* words and allusions which so often debases Mr. Burke's eloquence, and which was long ago stigmatized by Swift as “the most ruinous of all the corruptions of a language.”

## NOTE I. p. 161.

“ THE mixture of Ecclesiastical and Lay-members in the Church Courts is attended with the happiest effects. It corrects that *esprit de corps* which is apt to prevail in all assemblies of professional men. It affords the principal Nobility and Gentry of Scotland an opportunity of obtaining a seat in the General Assembly when any interesting object calls for their attendance ; and although in the factious and troublesome times which our ancestors saw, the General Assembly, by means of this mixture, became a scene of political debate, this accidental evil is counterbalanced by permanent

“ permanent good: for the presence of those  
 “ lay-members of high rank, whose names are  
 “ usually found upon the Roll of the Assembly,  
 “ has a powerful influence in maintaining that  
 “ connection between Church and State which  
 “ is necessary for the peace, security, and welfare  
 “ of both.” \*

NOTE K. p. 171.

THE paper referred to in the Text is entitled  
 “ Reasons of Dissent from the Judgement and  
 “ Resolution of the Commission, March 11,  
 “ 1752, resolving to inflict no Censure on the  
 “ Presbytery of Dumfermline for their Disobe-  
 “ dience in relation to the Settlement of Inver-  
 “ keithing.” It is subscribed by Dr. Robertson,  
 Dr. Blair, Mr. John Home, and a few of their  
 friends. I shall subjoin the two first Articles.

1. “ BECAUSE we conceive this sentence  
 “ of the Commission to be inconsistent with the  
 “ nature and first principles of society. When  
 “ men are considered as individuals, we acknow-  
 “ ledge that they have no guide but their own  
 “ understanding, and no judge but their own  
 “ conscience. But we hold it for an undeniable

\* MS. of Dr. Hill.

“ principle,

“ principle, that as members of society, they are  
“ bound in many instances to follow the judg-  
“ ment of the society. By joining together in  
“ society, we enjoy many advantages, which we  
“ could neither purchase nor secure in a dis-  
“ united state. In consideration of these, we  
“ consent that regulations for public order shall  
“ be established; not by the private fancy of  
“ every individual, but by the judgment of the  
“ majority, or of those with whom the society  
“ has consented to intrust the legislative power.  
“ Their judgment must necessarily be absolute  
“ and final, and their decisions received as the  
“ voice and instruction of the whole. In a  
“ numerous society it seldom happens that all  
“ the members think uniformly concerning the  
“ wisdom and expedience of any public regula-  
“ tion; but no sooner is that regulation enacted,  
“ than private judgment is so far superseded that  
“ even they who disapprove it, are notwithstand-  
“ ing bound to obey it, and to put it in execution  
“ if required; unless in a case of such gross  
“ iniquity and manifest violation of the original  
“ design of the society as justifies resistance to  
“ the supreme power, and makes it better to  
“ have the society dissolved than to submit to  
“ established iniquity. Such extraordinary cases  
“ we can easily conceive there may be, as will  
“ give

“ give any man a just title to seek the dissolution of the society to which he belongs, or “ at least will fully justify his withdrawing from “ it. But as long as he continues in it, professes regard for it, and reaps the emoluments “ of it, if he refuses to obey its laws, he manifestly acts both a disorderly and dishonest “ part: he lays claim to the privileges of the “ society while he contemns the authority of it; “ and by all principles of equity and reason is “ justly subjected to its censures. They who “ maintain that such disobedience deserves no “ censure, maintain, in effect, that there should “ be no such thing as government and order. “ They deny those first principles by which men “ are united in society; and endeavour to “ establish such maxims, as will justify not only “ licentiousness in ecclesiastical, but rebellion “ and disorder in civil government. And therefore, as the Reverend Commission have by “ their sentence declared, that disobedience to “ the supreme judicature of the Church neither “ infers guilt, nor deserves censure; as they have “ surrendered a right essential to the nature “ and subsistence of every society; as they have “ (so far as lay in them) betrayed the privileges “ and deserted the orders of the constitution; “ we could not have acted a dutiful part to the  
“ Church,

“ Church, nor a safe one to ourselves, unless  
“ we had dissented from this sentence; and  
“ craved liberty to represent to this venerable  
“ Assembly that this deed appears to us to be  
“ manifestly beyond the powers of a Com-  
“ mission.

2. “ Because this sentence of the Commission  
“ as it is subversive of society in general, so, in  
“ our judgments, it is absolutely inconsistent  
“ with the nature and preservation of ecclesi-  
“ astical society in particular.—The characters  
“ which we bear, of Ministers and Elders of  
“ this Church, render it unnecessary for us to  
“ declare, that we join with all Protestants in  
“ acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ to be  
“ the only King and Head of his Church. We  
“ admit that the church is not merely a volun-  
“ tary society, but a society founded by the laws  
“ of Christ. But to his laws we conceive it to  
“ be most agreeable, that order should be pre-  
“ served in the external administration of the  
“ affairs of the church. And we contend, in  
“ the words of our *Confession of Faith*, ‘ That  
“ there are some circumstances concerning the  
“ worship of God, and the government of the  
“ church, common to human actions and so-  
“ cieties, which are to be ordered by the light  
“ of nature and Christian prudence according  
“ to

“ to the general rules of the word, which are  
“ always to be observed.’ It is very evident  
“ that unless the church were supported by  
“ continual miracles, and a perpetual and ex-  
“ traordinary interposition of Heaven, it can  
“ only subsist by those fundamental maxims by  
“ which all society subsists. A kingdom divided  
“ against itself cannot stand. There can be no  
“ union, and by consequence there can be no  
“ society, where there is no subordination;  
“ and therefore since miracles are now ceased,  
“ we do conceive that no church or ecclesiasti-  
“ cal society can exist without obedience  
“ required from its members, and inforced by  
“ proper sanctions. Accordingly, there never  
“ was any regularly constituted church in the  
“ Christian world, where there was not at the  
“ same time some exercise of discipline and  
“ authority. It has indeed been asserted, ‘That  
“ the censures of the church are never to be  
“ inflicted, but upon open transgressors of the  
“ laws of Christ himself; and that no man is to  
“ be construed an open transgressor of the laws  
“ of Christ for not obeying the commands of  
“ any assembly of fallible men, when he declares  
“ it was a conscientious regard to the will of  
“ Christ that led him to this disobedience.’—  
“ This is called asserting liberty of conscience,  
“ and

“ and supporting the rights of private judgment; and upon such reasonings the Reverend Commission proceeded in coming to that decision of which we now complain. But we think ourselves called on to say, and we say it with concern, that such principles as these appear to us calculated to establish the most extravagant maxims of Independency, and to overthrow from the very foundation that happy ecclesiastical constitution which we glory in being members of, and which we are resolved to support. For upon these principles, no church whatever, consisting, as every church on earth must consist, of *fallible* men, has right to inflict any censure on any disobedient person. Let such person only think fit boldly to use the name of conscience, and sheltered under its authority, he acquires at once a right of doing whatsoever is good in his own eyes. If anarchy and confusion follow, as no doubt they will, there is, it seems, no remedy. We are sorry to say, that brethren who profess to hold such principles, ought to have acted more consistently with them, and not to have joined themselves to any church till once they had found out an assembly of *infallible* men, to whose authority they would have acknowledged submission to be due.

“ We

“ We allow to the right of private judgment  
“ all the extent and obligation that reason or  
“ religion require; but we can never admit,  
“ that any man’s private judgment gives him  
“ a right to disturb, with impunity, all public  
“ order. We hold, that as every man has a  
“ right to judge for himself in religious matters,  
“ so every church, or society of Christians, has  
“ a right to judge for itself, what method of  
“ external administration is most agreeable to  
“ the laws of Christ; and no man ought to  
“ become a member of that church, who is not  
“ resolved to conform himself to its administra-  
“ tion. We think it very consistent with con-  
“ science for inferiors to disapprove, in their  
“ own mind, of a judgment given by a superior  
“ court, and yet to put that judgment in  
“ execution as the deed of their superiors for  
“ conscience sake; seeing we humbly conceive  
“ it is, or ought to be, a matter of conscience  
“ with every member of the church, to support  
“ the authority of that church to which he  
“ belongs. Church-censures are declared by  
“ our *Confession of Faith* to be ‘ necessary, not  
“ only for gaining and reclaiming the offending  
“ brethren, but also for deterring of others  
“ from the like offences, and for purging out the  
“ leaven which might leaven the whole lump.’

“ What

“ What these censures are, and what the crimes  
“ against which they are directed, is easily to  
“ be learned from the constitution of every  
“ church, and whoever believes its censure to  
“ be too severe, or its known orders and laws  
“ to be in any respect iniquitous, so that he  
“ cannot in conscience comply with them, ought  
“ to beware of involving himself in sin by enter-  
“ ing into it; or if he hath rashly joined himself,  
“ he is bound, as an honest man and a good  
“ Christian, to withdraw, and to keep his con-  
“ science clear and undefiled. But on the other  
“ hand, if a judicature, which is appointed to be  
“ the guardian and defender of the laws and  
“ orders of the society, shall absolve them who  
“ break their laws, from all censure, and by  
“ such a deed encourage and invite to future  
“ disobedience, we conceive it will be found,  
“ that they have exceeded their powers, and  
“ betrayed their trust in the most essential  
“ instance.”

\* \* \* \* \*

NOTE L. p. 173.

“ Dr. ROBERTSON’s system with respect  
“ to the Law of Patronage proceeded on the  
“ following principles: That as patronage is the

“ law of the land, the courts of a national  
“ church established and protected by law, and  
“ all the individual ministers of that church are  
“ bound, in as far as it depends upon exertions  
“ arising from the duties of their place, to give  
“ it effect: that every opposition to the legal  
“ rights of patrons tends to diminish that rever-  
“ ence which all the subjects of a free govern-  
“ ment ought to entertain for the law; and  
“ that it is dangerous to accustom the people to  
“ think that they can elude the law or defeat its  
“ operation, because success in one instance leads  
“ to greater licentiousness. Upon these prin-  
“ ciples Dr. Robertson thought that the church  
“ courts betrayed their duty to the constitution,  
“ when the spirit of their decisions, or negli-  
“ gence in enforcing obedience to their orders,  
“ created unnecessary obstacles to the exercise  
“ of the right of patronage, and fostered in  
“ the minds of the people the false idea that  
“ they have a right to chuse their own ministers,  
“ or even a negative upon the nomination of  
“ the patron. He was well aware that the sub-  
“ jects of Great Britain are entitled to apply in  
“ a constitutional manner for the repeal of every  
“ law, which they consider as a grievance. But  
“ while he supported patronage as the existing  
“ law, he regarded it also as the most expedient  
“ method

“ method of settling vacant parishes. It did not  
“ appear to him that the people are competent  
“ judges of those qualities which a minister  
“ should possess in order to be a useful teacher  
“ either of the doctrines of pure religion, or of  
“ the precepts of sound morality. He suspected  
“ that if the probationers of the church were  
“ taught to consider their success in obtaining  
“ a settlement as depending upon a popular  
“ election, many of them would be tempted to  
“ adopt a manner of preaching more calculated  
“ to please the people than to promote their  
“ edification. He thought that there is little  
“ danger to be apprehended from the abuse of  
“ the law of patronage, because the presentee  
“ must be chosen from amongst those whom  
“ the church itself had approved of, and had  
“ licensed as qualified for the office of the  
“ ministry; because a presentee cannot be ad-  
“ mitted to the benefice, if any relevant charge  
“ as to his life or doctrine be proved against  
“ him: and because, after ordination and  
“ admission, he is liable to be deposed for  
“ improper conduct. When every possible  
“ precaution is thus taken to prevent unqua-  
“ lified persons from being introduced into the  
“ church, or those who afterwards prove un-  
“ worthy from remaining in it, the occasional

“ evils and abuses from which no human institution is exempted, could not, in the opinion of Dr. Robertson, be fairly urged as reasons against the law of patronage.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Such was the system which, in conjunction with the friend of his youth, Dr. Robertson ably supported for thirty years after his first appearance in the General Assembly. In speaking upon a particular question, he sometimes gave the outlines of this system for the satisfaction of the House in general, and the instruction of the younger members. The decisions which for a long course of years he dictated, form a common law of the church in which the system is unfolded. His conversation imprinted upon the minds of those who were admitted to it during the course of the Assembly, the principles which pervaded his decisions: and thus were diffused throughout the church the rational and consistent ideas of Presbyterian government upon which he and his friends uniformly acted.

“ These ideas continue to direct the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland. For although it is not likely that any member of that House will ever possess the unrivalled undisputed influence with his brethren to which

“ which peculiar advantages of character and  
“ situation conducted Dr. Robertson, his prin-  
“ ciples are so thoroughly understood, and so  
“ cordially approved by the great majority of  
“ the Church of Scotland, that by means of  
“ that attention to the business and forms of  
“ the House which is paid by some of his early  
“ friends who yet survive, and by a succession  
“ of younger men trained in his school, the  
“ Ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland proceed on  
“ the same orderly systematical plan which was  
“ first introduced by the ability, the prudence,  
“ the firmness, the candour] and moderation  
“ which he displayed upon every occasion.”

## NOTE M. p. 187.

A FEW particulars, “ in addition to Dr. Erskine’s funeral sermon on the death of Dr. Robertson,” have been kindly communicated to me by my friend the Rev. Sir Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, Bart. The testimony which they contain to Dr. Robertson’s merits as an ecclesiastical leader will have no small weight with those who are acquainted with the worth and the talents of the Writer.

“ In mentioning the character of Dr. Robertson as a leader of the prevailing party in the

“ church, there is a circumstance which ought  
“ not to be omitted, by which he distinguished  
“ himself from all his predecessors who had held  
“ the same situation. Before his time, those of  
“ the clergy who pretended to guide the deli-  
“ berations of the General Assembly, derived  
“ the chief part of their influence from their  
“ connection with the men who had the ma-  
“ nagement of Scots affairs. They allowed  
“ themselves to receive instructions from them,  
“ and even from those who acted under them.  
“ They looked up to them as their patrons,  
“ and ranged themselves with their dependants.  
“ Their influence, of consequence, subsisted no  
“ longer than the powers from which it was de-  
“ rived. A change in the management of Scots  
“ affairs either left the prevailing party in the  
“ church without their leaders, or obliged their  
“ leaders to submit to the meanness of receiving  
“ instructions from other patrons.—Dr. Robert-  
“ son, from the beginning, disengaged himself  
“ completely from a dependance which was  
“ never respectable, and to which he felt him-  
“ self superior. He had the countenance of  
“ men in power; but he received it as a man  
“ who judged for himself, and whose influence  
“ was his own. The political changes of his  
“ time did not affect his situation. The dif-  
“ ferent

“ ferent men who had the management of Scots  
“ affairs uniformly co-operated with him—but  
“ though they assisted him, they looked up to  
“ *his personal influence* in the church, which no  
“ man in the country believed to be derived  
“ from them.

“ Those who differed most in opinion with  
“ Dr. Robertson, but who are sincerely attached  
“ to the interests and to the integrity of the  
“ church, must allow this conduct to have  
“ been both respectable and meritorious. It  
“ will always reflect honour on his memory, and  
“ has left an important lesson to his successors.

“ It is not useless to mention his fairness in  
“ the debates of the Assembly. Whether his  
“ opponents were convinced by his arguments  
“ or not, they were commonly sensible of the  
“ candour with which he stated them, and of  
“ the personal respect with which they were  
“ treated by him. And though the conces-  
“ sions which he was always ready to make to  
“ them when they did not affect the substance  
“ of his own argument, might be imputed to  
“ political sagacity as well as to candour, there  
“ was uniformly an appearance of candour in  
“ his manner, by which he preserved their good  
“ opinion, and which greatly contributed to  
“ extend his influence among his own friends.

“ Like all popular meetings, the General Assembly sometimes contains individuals, who have more acuteness than delicacy, and who allow themselves to eke out their arguments by rude and personal invectives. Dr. Robertson had a superior address in replying to men of this cast, without adopting their asperity, and often made them feel the absurdity of the personal attack, by the attention which he seemed to bestow on their argument.

“ It should be mentioned also, that Dr. Robertson's early example, and his influence in more advanced life, chiefly contributed to render the debates in the Assembly interesting and respectable, by bringing forward all the men of abilities to their natural share of the public business. Before his time, this had been almost entirely in the hands of the older members of the church, who were the only persons that were thought entitled to deliver their opinions, and whose influence was often derived more from their age than from their judgment or their talents.

“ I do not know whether the reasons, which led Dr. Robertson to retire from the Assembly after 1780, have ever been thoroughly understood.—They were not suggested by his age, for he was then only fifty-nine; nor by any diminution

“ diminution of his influence, for, in the apprehension of the public, it was at that time as great as it had ever been. It is very probable that he anticipated a time when a new leader might come forward ; and thought it better to retire while his influence was undiminished, than to run the risque, in the end of his life, of a struggle with younger men, who might be as successful as he had been.—But I recollect distinctly, what he once said to myself on the subject, which I am persuaded he repeated to many others. He had been often reproached by the more violent men of his party for not adopting stronger measures, than he thought either right or wise. He had yielded to them many points against his own judgment ; but they were not satisfied : he was plagued with letters of reproach and remonstrance on a variety of subjects, and he complained of the petulance and acrimony with which they were written. But there was one subject which for some years before he retired had become particularly uneasy to him, and on which he said he had been more urged and fretted than on all the other subjects of contention in the church ; the scheme into which many of his friends entered zealously for abolishing subscription

“ scription to the Confession of Faith and  
“ Formula. This he expressly declared his  
“ resolution to resist in every form.—But he  
“ was so much teased with remonstrances on  
“ the subject, that he mentioned them as hav-  
“ ing at least *confirmed* his resolution to retire.  
“ He claimed to himself the merit of having  
“ prevented this controversy from being agitated  
“ in the Assemblies; but warned me as a young  
“ man that it would become the chief contro-  
“ versy of my time, and stated to me the  
“ reasons which had determined his opinion on  
“ the subject. The conversation was probably  
“ about 1782 or 1783.—I have a distinct recol-  
“ lection of it; though I have no idea that his  
“ prediction will be verified, as the controversy  
“ seems to be more asleep now than it was a  
“ few years ago.”

#### NOTE N. p. 198.

THE zeal with which Dr. Robertson pro-  
motcd the execution of the statistical accounts  
of Scotland has been publickly acknowledged by  
Sir John Sinclair; and I have frequently heard  
Dr. Robertson express, in the strongest terms,  
his sense of the obligations which the country  
lay under to the projector and conductor of that  
great national work; and the pride with which

he

he reflected on the monument which was thus raised to the information and liberality of the Scottish clergy.

From the following letters it would appear, that he had contributed some aid to the exertions of those who so honourably distinguished themselves a few years ago in the parliamentary discussions about the African Trade. His own sentiments on that subject were eloquently stated thirty years before, in the only sermon which he ever published.

*From Mr. WILBERFORCE to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

Sir,

London, 25th January, 1788.

I SHALL not begin by apologizing to you for now presuming to intrude myself on you without introduction, but with condemning myself for not having done it sooner. The subject which is the occasion of my troubling you with this letter, that of the Slave Trade, is one on which I am persuaded our sentiments coincide, and in calling forth your good offices in such a cause I trust you will think that whilst I incur I also bestow an obligation.—What I have to request is, that you will have the goodness to communicate to me such facts and observations as may be useful to me in the important task I have

have undertaken, of bringing forward into parliamentary discussion, the situation of that much injured part of the species, the poor Negroes : in common with the rest of my countrymen I have to complain, that I am under the necessity of betaking myself directly to you for the information I solicit : an application to my bookseller ought to have supplied it : but if there be some ground of charge against you for having failed in your engagements to the public in this particular, it is the rather incumbent on you to attend to the claim of an individual ; consider it as a sort of expiation for your offence, and rejoice if so weighty a crime comes off with so light a punishment.—Though the main object I have in view, is the prevention of all further exports of Slaves from Africa, yet their state in the West Indies, and the most practicable mode of meliorating it, the effects that might follow from this change of system in all its extended and complicated connections and relations, both in Africa and the Western World, and this not only in our own case but in those of other European nations, who might be induced to follow our example ; all these come into question, and constitute a burthen too heavy for one of powers like mine to bear, without my calling for help where it may be so abundantly afforded :

afforded: let me add also, that I should be extremely thankful for any intelligence respecting the institutions of the Jesuits in Paraguay, which, it has long struck me, might prove a most useful subject of investigation to any one who would form a plan for the civilization of Africa.— Allow me to add, that I shall wait to hear from you with anxiety, because the business must be brought into the House soon after the meeting.—I will not waste your valuable time by excuses for this letter, if they are necessary, but once more I will venture to assure myself that you will not think them so.

I have the honour to be, &c.

## W. WILBERFORCE.

*From Mr. WILBERFORCE to Dr. ROBERTSON.*

I HAVE been honoured with your packets by the post, as well as with your Sermon, and return you my sincerest thanks for your very obliging attention to my request; I am fully sensible to the value of the favourable sentiments you express concerning me, and as one concession always produces a new demand, perhaps you will not be surprized at my now taking the liberty of intimating a hope that I may consider what has

passed as constituting a sort of acquaintance between us, which it will give me particular pleasure to indulge an expectation of cultivating, when any opportunity shall allow.

I remain, with great respect and esteem, &c.

W. WILBERFORCE.

NOTE O. p. 204.

DR. ROBERTSON's second son is now Lieutenant Colonel of the 92d regiment. His name is repeatedly mentioned with distinction in the History of Lord Cornwallis's military operations in India; particularly in the general orders after the siege of Nundydroog, where he commanded in the European flank company that led the assault. The following paragraph from Colonel Dirom's Narrative contains a testimony to his conduct on this occasion, which would have been grateful to the feelings of his father had he survived to peruse it.

“ The carnage which must have ensued in  
“ clearing the fort of the enemy, was prevented  
“ partly by a number of the garrison escaping  
“ by ropes and ladders over a low part of the  
“ wall; but chiefly by the exertions of Captain  
“ Robertson; who seeing the place was car-  
“ ried,

“ tried, turned all his attention to preserving  
 “ order, and preventing the unnecessary effu-  
 “ sion of blood. To his humanity the bukshey  
 “ and killedar owed their lives; and of the  
 “ garrison there were only about forty men  
 “ killed and wounded.”

Dr. Robertson's youngest son is Lieutenant-Colonel of a regiment serving in Ceylon, and Deputy Adjutant-General of his Majesty's forces in that island. An account of Ceylon, which he has communicated in manuscript to some of his friends, is said to do great honour to his abilities.

NOTE P. p. 208.

THIS request was conveyed to Dr. Robertson by Mr. Dalzel, and was received by him with much sensibility, as a mark of the esteem and approbation of a Society over which he had presided for thirty years.

I neglected to mention in a former note the Latin Discourses which Dr. Robertson pronounced annually before the University, in compliance with the established practice among his predecessors in office. The first of these was read on the third of February 1763. Its object was to recommend the study of classical learning; and it contained, among a variety of other splendid passages, a beautiful panegyric on the Stoical Philosophy. His second Discourse

(9th of February 1764,) consisted chiefly of moral and literary observations, adapted to the particular circumstances of youth. My friend Mr. Dalzel, who has lately perused these Latin manuscripts with care, observes of this Oration, “ that the style is uncommonly elegant and “ impressive, and possesses all the distinguishing “ characteristics of Dr. Robertson’s English com- “ positions.”

A third Discourse was pronounced on February 14th, 1765; and a fourth on February 20th, 1766. The subject of both is the same; the question concerning the comparative advantages of public and private education. The execution is such as might be expected from the abilities of the Author, exerted on a topic on which he was so eminently fitted to decide, not only by his professional situation and habits, but by an extensive and discriminating knowledge of the world.

These annual discourses (which never failed to produce a strong and happy impression on the mind of his young hearers) he was compelled, after this period, to discontinue by his avocations as an Author, and by other engagements which he conceived to be of still greater importance.— It is indeed astonishing that he was able to devote so much time as he did to his academical duties; particu-

particularly when we consider that all his works were at first committed to writing in his own hand, and that he seldom, if ever, attempted to dictate to an *amanuensis*.—It may be gratifying to those to whom the literary habits of authors are an object of curiosity to add, that his practice in composition was (according to his own statement in a letter to Mr. Strahan,) “ to finish as “ near perfection as he was able, so that his “ subsequent alterations were inconsiderable.”

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IT might be considered by some as a blameable omission, if I were to overlook, in this Memoir, the marks of regard which Dr. Robertson received from different literary Academies on the Continent. I have already taken notice of the honour conferred on him by the Royal Academy of History at Madrid; but I forgot to mention, in the proper place, that in 1781, he was elected one of the Foreign Members of the Academy of Sciences at Padua; and in 1783, one of the Foreign Members of the Imperial Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburgh.

From the last of these cities, he was honoured with another very flattering distinction; the intelligence of which was conveyed to him by

his friend Dr. Rogerson, in a letter from which the following passage is transcribed.

“ Your History of America was received and  
“ perused by her Imperial Majesty with singular  
“ marks of approbation. All your historical pro-  
“ ductions have been ever favourite parts of her  
“ reading. Not long ago, doing me the honour  
“ to converse with me upon historical composi-  
“ tion, she mentioned you with particular dis-  
“ tinction, and with much admiration of that  
“ sagacity and discernment displayed by you in  
“ painting the human mind and character, as  
“ diversified by the various causes that operated  
“ upon it, in those æras and states of society  
“ which your subject led you to treat. She  
“ assigned you the place of first model in that  
“ species of composition. As to the History of  
“ Charles V. she was pleased to add, *c'est le*  
“ *compagnon constant de tous mes voyages ; je ne*  
“ *me lasse jamais à le lire, & particulièrement le*  
“ *premier volume.*”

“ She then presented a very handsome gold  
“ enamelled snuff-box, richly set with diamonds,  
“ ordering me to transmit it to you, and to de-  
“ fine your acceptance of it as a mark of her  
“ esteem, observing, at the same time, most  
“ graciously, that a person whose labours had

“ afforded her so much satisfaction, merited some  
“ attention from her.”

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THE active part which Dr. Robertson took in the foundation of the Society before which the foregoing Memoir was read, is so well known to all the members, that it did not appear necessary to recal it to their recollection. For the information of others, however, it may be proper to mention, that the first idea of this establishment, and of the plan adopted in its formation, was suggested by him; and that, without his zealous co-operation, there is little probability that the design would ever have been carried into execution.

T H E E N D.

E R R A T U M.

Page 232. line 2. for 1776 read 1785.

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